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LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

MAY 1900.

*One of Ourselves.*¹

BY L. B. WALFORD,
AUTHOR OF 'MR. SMITH,' &C.

CHAPTER XVII.

WITHOUT A FAMILY AUDIENCE.

THE door opened to admit a slender young man of medium height, with an expression of extreme seriousness on his countenance.

And it was no wonder that Lionel looked serious. From the moment that he had been told he was to go to Henham Park, he had realised that to Henham Park go he must; whatever he said, or whatever anyone else said, the thing had got to be done; and it is almost pathetic to think how much this meant to our young man.

He hated going anywhere out of his own beat. Reserved and diffident by nature, the circumstances of his boyhood and youth, the consciousness of being never wanted, always got rid of when possible, the fear of intrusion, the horror of self-assertion—all combined to freeze his blood and make it an effort to do anything strange or new.

To most young people there is something agreeable in the anticipation of making fresh acquaintances, particularly if these happen to be of a promising kind. Visions of gaiety and jollity entwine themselves into the prospect.

If there be a little natural bashfulness at the outset, it is felt

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that this will pass; while as often as not the drawback is not even there.

It was always there, a giant in size, and completely obscuring the light beyond, in Lionel Colvin's case.

Nor had the light, as a rule, been of a nature to dazzle him when its rays, such as they were, shone forth.

By this time he was stolidly quiescent in the Farrell drawing-rooms and other drawing-rooms of the sort to which he and his sisters were accustomed; he could stand still wherever he found himself, and if let alone remain standing still—or if talked to, talk back—or again if desired to render a lady a service, render it—all with perfect outward propriety and inward indifference.

The Farrells did very well; he felt equal to the Farrells. 'They are about our level, now,' he told himself.

But with Lady Blanche Massitur the case was different; the frozen blood thawed and rioted in his veins; he was ashamed of himself; ashamed to think that he loathed and yet longed to go to her house; ashamed to catch himself wondering if he should look, and act, and feel as he ought to do?

'Why should I mind? Other fellows would not mind!' he muttered. 'It's a deuce of a shame that *I* should mind;' for though not used to strong language, the strength of the case extorted it.

And then she was 'Blanche.'

A great curiosity at times overpowered every other emotion. His father's ideal, the writer of those letters so dear to their recipient, bequeathed by him as his most priceless treasure.

'Blanche!' He had never hoped, never dreamed of hoping, for such a thing as to meet 'Blanche' face to face, though it had sometimes crossed his mind that in the future there was always a possibility of hearing whether or not she still existed, were married or single, had children or the like?

It may be wondered that he had not thought of this on coming to a neighbourhood where a lady of the name resided; but 'No, no; it cannot be she,' he had early decided, for the rank and status of his wealthy neighbour seemed to preclude the idea, and he had never mentioned it even to Bet. 'There are plenty of "Blanches," it is quite a common name,' reflected he; and speedily forgot the coincidence.

Now it returned to comfort him and rehabilitate him somewhat in his own esteem, as affording a reasonable motive for

silencing chatter about Henham, whose very name he preferred not to hear whilst it was still an unknown, mysterious land.

'Do tell them to be quiet about it,' he had implored Bet; and Bet told—with additions of her own.

They could not however suppress excitement among themselves; and he saw it; and, as may be imagined, his own tremors were not allayed thereby.

He set off from the church door.

'Aren't you coming home first?' Georgie was about to run after her brother, but Bet with a firm hand held her back.

'But he's going *now*,' cried she, looking round with astonished face. 'Don't you see? He's not going back with us, though it is quite as near from our back way—oh, Bet, I wish you wouldn't,' jerking her arm from the other's grasp. 'You do hurt. I only thought that Lionel——'

Lionel however was out of hearing.

'Now you may say what you like,' quoth Bet, grimly. 'Go on——' as no result followed. 'If you must be idiotic, you must; why don't you go on?' sarcastic and triumphant.

Georgie marched off with Poll, and swung a gate in her sister's face. She had a plump little arm, and it really was sore from Bet's pinch; she felt furious with Bet.

'But they'll make it up in half an hour, and go to meet Lionel without telling me, I shouldn't wonder,' reflected Poll, who knew their ways. 'They just shan't. I'll take care they don't.'

It was not merely the heat which had ruffled the feathers of all three little birds; the tumultuous emotions of the past few days had proved too much for their nerves.

Let us return to Lionel.

His appearance within the great saloon where Lady Blanche sat, without her having caught any glimpse of his approaching figure in the avenue, of which she commanded a view, was due to his having taken a circuitous route in order not to arrive too soon.

He had walked slowly; sat on the bridge by which his sisters had dabbled in the brook; lingered here and there, consulting his watch at intervals; and at length found that by taking a round not thought of before, skirting the park and entering by farm precincts in the rear, he could just reach his destination at the fateful 'two o'clock'—on which he had started afresh briskly. The stable clock clanged its two deliberate strokes almost at the

same instant as that in the drawing-room, and a dozen more within the mansion chimed and tinkled theirs; and Lionel gulped in his throat and rang the front-door bell ere the last ting-ting sounded.

Some one else also gulped in her throat, as Lady Blanche rose and walked half across the room to greet her guest.

She was the first to speak, as was right and proper.

'I have been watching for you from the window,' said she cheerfully—he might have been the most ordinary acquaintance by her accent; 'but I suppose you took another way?' returning to her seat, and looking suggestively towards another.

He explained that he had taken another way.

'There is some shade in the lanes, no doubt?'

There was some shade.

'And I really think this is the hottest day we have had,' proceeded Lady Blanche, easily. 'Even in Germany it was not as hot as this. My niece and I have just returned from Homburg——' and she proceeded to enlarge.

To herself she was saying: 'So like—oh, so like. The same thoughtful, earnest face; the same perfect repose of manner; the same, the very same voice, only a little lower and less decided. Lionel could speak with a great deal of decision at times.' Aloud: 'I am so glad you could come to us to-day, because, as it happens, we are alone, and it is so much pleasanter to be alone when one first meets with—your sisters have told you of the old friendship?'

He quaked. Had not Bet promised him there should be no reference to 'the old friendship'? What if it were beginning? If he were now expected to be confidential and responsive? But scarce had the thought sent a shiver through his veins, ere he perceived his terror groundless. In quite an every-day voice his hostess was proceeding:

'You cannot think how rejoiced I am to find in my old friend's daughters companions for my niece so near at hand, and just her own age. I really felt quite aggrieved to learn that so much time has been already wasted. But, after all, we are none of us likely to fly away, and there is still some of the summer, even of this summer left. You are not free often in the daytime, I understand?'

He explained that he was never free, Saturday afternoons and Sundays excepted.

'Several of my nephews tell me the same of themselves,' said

her ladyship, with a useful remembrance of one grumbling youth, who traded on his hard lot (in reality a much easier one than Lionel's). 'So many young men are in offices nowadays. But I fancy you must do some soldiering?' smiled she, for her eye had noticed his straight back and well-poised head.

He admitted being a volunteer.

Lady Blanche thought as much, evidently plumed herself on her perspicacity, and was great on volunteering.

'She didn't look down on it, I assure you,' Lionel told his sisters afterwards.

They were getting on nicely when the luncheon gong sounded, and with the summons the younger lady appeared.

'Now I do wonder what he is like!' thought Miss Leonora, as she turned the handle of the door.

She herself was the fairest of the fair as far as hair and complexion went; not precisely what would be called a pretty girl, if one were critical as to regularity of feature, but with all the advantages of a light figure, elegance of movement, and perfect attitudes. Her frock, of a cream-coloured summer silk, with soft rufflings round throat and wrist, was further set off by a bunch of dark red roses at the waist.

He approved mentally.

'Sunday is always a hungry day,' said Lady Blanche, having also noted with approval the grave bow which acknowledged her introduction; and as the young man rose to his feet and remained standing, she rose also. 'We are all hungry people, I hope;' and she led the way to the dining-room.

Luncheon was spread on a small table at the far end of a spacious apartment, obviously only in use at meal-times; and as the three seated themselves with cheerful alacrity, and fell to work on the instant with no pause in the talk, which flowed on as though they had known each other all their lives, Lionel began to enjoy himself.

The formidable aspect of the affair vanished. He did not in the least mind being the only man present—rather liked it; became interested in topics as they rose; ere long forgot himself altogether.

That accomplished, the rest was easy. Lady Blanche well understood human nature when she elected to get over the first meeting without a family audience; and it would have amazed Bet, Poll, and Georgie to see and hear their usually impassive and impregnable brother now.

Perhaps it was a pleasure to himself to talk. He had lived his own inner life so long, and found it so difficult to impart to sisters who did not understand him as they did each other, the interests which touched him most nearly, that to find current topics under review and himself regarded as an authority by intelligent and interested companions was an agreeable novelty.

Lady Blanche and her niece not only read the newspapers, but they knew personally several of the personages prominent at the moment, from whom items had been culled which added piquancy to the discussion of various situations with their problematical results. It was gratifying to hear that the very same contingency which had suggested itself to his own mind had been also present to that of Lady Blanche's kinsman, who, as it happened, was pulling the strings of the department which had the affair in hand.

It was delightful to find that he had seen further than most in penetrating the worthlessness of a rumour which he was now assured had no foundation. He was applauded for his perspicacity. Lady Blanche was afraid there were few who had not been deceived by the plausibility of the report.

'I feel sure you would like to meet my cousin,' said she, as they rose from the table; 'he is an interesting man, and often runs down to us for a Sunday. I must remember next time he comes.'

She knew what she was doing; could gauge the pleasure she was giving; and though the young man wondered afterwards if he had said enough, or indeed if he had said anything at all in response, was perfectly satisfied.

'Let us come into the picture gallery,' she suggested; and Lionel was shown Vandycks and Holbeins, Romneys and Lelys, Gainsboroughs and Greuzes, among which he would have been sadly astray had it not chanced that in his dreary leisure hours of earlier date he had occasionally, from sheer lack of anywhere else to go with an empty pocket, betaken himself to the National Gallery, and gazed and pondered there. The experience stood him now in good stead. He did not feel ignorant; once or twice he even made a hit.

'You know more than I do about them,' laughed Leonora, having appealed to her aunt, and found herself in the wrong on a contested point.

Presently they came to portraits of more recent date, and paused in front of one somewhat conspicuously placed, no one saying a word.

It was the full-length figure of a young girl, robed in white, her only ornaments roses.

'Oh!' said Lionel, fastening his eyes upon it, and he stepped closer with a sudden eagerness, while Lady Blanche, after a glance, turned away. She could not look at him, nor exhibit her face at the moment.

What would he think? Would he?—was he?—yes, it was plain he knew; something in that silent gaze told he knew.

'That was done just before her marriage,' murmured Leonora in a gentle undertone. 'She says it flattered her; but no one else thought so. She wanted to have it taken down after—I mean she thought it ought to be at Downing Hall,' hastily.

He understood. Only at Downing Hall had been exhibited that bright joyousness of expression, that radiance of youth, that arch, smiling, glowing beauty. Only when love and hope were warm, and all the world was fair, and the springs of life were bubbling in rainbow hues.

This then was his father's 'Blanche'? Those the fond eyes which had gazed into his; those the lips he had pressed; that the golden head from which the curl, still soft and shining in the faded pocket-book, had been taken?

Yet, strange to say, he did not wish he were alone to look and think. That Blanche herself had moved quietly aside was indeed an unconscious relief; he preferred not to speak to or to be spoken to by the dignified, gracious woman, who seemed, as she doubtless was, another creature from that which had sprung into being beneath the painter's hands; but another presence did not jar upon him; he did not wish Leonora away also.

The two stood so long in mute survey that Lady Blanche, who had herself sunk into a dream, woke up to a vague consciousness of neglect, and a fear lest inadvertently she had betrayed emotion which was being tacitly respected by her young companions. In the interval she had seen much; but to them her girlish portrait, eliciting possibly a faint, superficial interest, could have no tale to tell; she must not let her vanity be deceived by their lingering in front of it. 'Tiresome of me,' muttered she; 'perhaps he even thinks it was a trap to catch a compliment, an affectation of modesty, in order to let him speak out his admiration to Leonora;' and she turned quickly.

'I was thinking that perhaps we had come to an end of all we had to show indoors, Leonora—at any rate, for this time; we have some odds and ends that might be interesting on a wet day,

but to-day is too lovely to be wasted over them. Suppose we come out? Oh no, you are not going yet,' with laughing decision, as Lionel, quick to take a supposed hint, began murmurs of departure. 'Oh dear, no; we cannot spare you for a long time yet. Leonora and I usually camp out on Sunday afternoons, and,' pointing across a velvet sward to shade beyond, 'over there is our camping-ground; we have coffee—ah! there is the coffee going out now,' as footmen were seen issuing from a low door, carrying trays upon which the sun glinted invitingly.

'What a beautiful garden!' murmured Lionel, his eye drinking it all in, an intense, inexpressible pleasure stimulating and yet subjugating his senses. All around seemed strange and yet natural. It was natural to be looking from the mullioned window over the brilliant flower-beds beneath, and from them to the soft green turf and cool shrubbery on every side; anon to raise his eyes, and view through vistas sloping this way and that, the undulating park and far-stretching landscape glowing in summer heat.

Could that blue beyond be the common country which had always seemed so uninteresting to him, as inhabited by ordinary mortals monotonous in their mediocrity?

Could it really be himself who was now within the charmed, invisible domain, upon whose boundaries he had hitherto gazed listlessly, considering them too impregnable even for envy?

The odd thing was, that with all the strangeness he felt at home, in his native element. He had not merely no desire to depart, he longed to stay. The frank command was music in his ear. He experienced a thrill of ineffable delight as he turned to follow Lady Blanche, and found that Leonora was coming too. Leonora was speaking to him; he hardly knew what he answered.

And then he found himself seated in a low chair beneath the spreading shade, listening and responding while the talk flowed musically on, and all he did and said seemed right.

Leonora's pets gathered round her, and were severally introduced and required to make friends. Lionel thought he had never seen a prettier sight than Leonora with her great collie's head upon her lap, and her doves alighting by turns upon their mistress's hand.

'She must show you her dovecot,' said Lady Blanche, who had perhaps her own thoughts. 'These are only a few outside pensioners; Leonora's dovecot is always too full, though it can hold—let me see, my dear, how many can it hold?'

Leonora however could not tell; she had long lost count; but would be very willing to lead the way thither presently.

Everything was to be done 'presently.'

Would he care to fish in the lake some evening? Evening was the best time, and Lady Blanche understood he was free after—what o'clock did he say?

He said, unblushingly, an hour sooner than he would have stated to any other inquirer.

The croquet question was then raised. Lionel, gravely, was very fond of croquet. He had not—ah—played much (only under dire compulsion had he ever taken a hand); but their little ground at The Nook was so rough and badly kept; 'but I'll have it seen to now,' he averred briskly; 'you see, we have only had to play among ourselves, or with people we don't much care for. My sisters have been obliged to—to—'

'I understand,' said Lady Blanche, kindly.

'And we are so near the high road that the passers-by sometimes look over the wall,' continued Lionel, who had stopped a game on this account a few evenings before. He had come home a little out of sorts, and the sight of three or four rude-looking fellows watching his sisters, and passing remarks on their play, had not tended to soothe his feelings.

The girls themselves, it appeared, had been aware of their 'gallery' without resenting it.

'They did us no harm,' said Bet; 'and though you say they were talking about us, we heard nothing.'

'Except once,' amended Georgie, with elation; 'once, when I hit the stick from right away at the other end of the ground. They could not help cheering. I heard them; I would have cheered myself. It was a fluke, of course; but they appreciated it all the same.'

'Bet, do you think it a proper thing that young ladies should be watched and applauded by a set of common workmen?'

Bet however had indignantly repudiated any responsibility in the matter. She could not help the men being there, and she did not suppose Lionel would have wished her to order them away. They would only have been impudent if she had.

Could they not play somewhere else?

Where else could they play?

At least, they could be quiet over it; not shout, and attract notice.

A good deal of give-and-take irritation had been expended on the subject.

So that even before coming to Henham, Lionel, half ashamed of his strictures, as well as realising their futility, had almost decided on a step which would settle the difficulty—namely, that of raising the wall which, by its lowness, permitted too much publicity; and he could now assure himself that he was about to have this done forthwith.

‘I suppose you *are* rather near the road,’ said Lady Blanche; ‘but really one would never guess it, once within your pretty grounds. And you have always the woods at the back for an outlet.’

He admitted the woods.

‘About the croquet, I see the force of your objection,’ continued the speaker. ‘In my day young ladies never played games in public as they do now; but I hear of my nieces and their friends competing at lawn-tennis and golf with all the world looking on. Our archery meetings, and we had plenty of them, took place at each other’s houses, and very much we enjoyed ourselves, though perhaps we did not play quite so professionally as they do nowadays.’

‘I am afraid, auntie, you would be nowhere if you played tennis now;’ Leonora shook her head gaily.

‘My dear, I never played tennis. It only came in after I had been some years married. Archery was all the rage up to that time, and I won a silver medal the day I was engaged——’ she broke off short. To be talking to Lionel Colvin’s son of the day she was engaged! She passed her hand before her eyes.

‘It must have been grand to win a silver medal,’ said Leonora, perceiving nothing, ‘and I dare say archery suited you better than lawn-tennis. I can’t fancy you skipping about behind a net, but I can see you quite Diana-like before a target.’

‘An absolutely perfect Diana,’ thought Lionel; but, despite a flash of reminiscence, his eye was more occupied watching the caressing hand that moved among Ghillie’s black and yellow curls, than with his elder companion’s jewelled fingers pressing down, as it were, scenes that started to life beneath an unfortunate turn of speech. He had barely noticed the brief halt and sigh ere Lady Blanche was herself again.

‘We do not keep a lawn-tennis ground here, as Leonora does not care for it; but we play bowls in the summer evenings.’

‘Oh, do you?’ The one outdoor game which Lionel really

cared for was the old-fashioned one of bowls, and he often put up with queer fellow-players when it was in question. One house in particular he would go to, despite Bet. There was no need for *them* to be friendly, he said; and quite allowed that the Green-laws were noisy and vulgar, but he could not forswear their bowling alley. He knew its ways to a nicety, and there was a pair of bowls which were already looked upon as his, whose bias he could calculate upon to a hair's breadth.

His eyes glistened as Lady Blanche spoke. 'My brothers are so fond of bowls, they ask for the bag directly they come; and at Downing they play regularly. Leonora and I are poor performers, but we are never let off;' and aunt and niece smiled at each other.

Lionel saw himself throwing the 'Jack' hither and thither over soft green turf, always not too far, always within range for—Leonora.

At last he had to go. The long, long afternoon was drowsily merging itself into evening, and he had been told at the outset that the ladies attended evening service on Sundays. A stable clock, the same which had earlier greeted his approach, now aided his departure, since he could rise surprised and apologetic, as it again clanged its ponderous notes, and Lady Blanche, rising also, shared the surprise and made apology on her own part.

'It was hardly fair of us to keep you so long from your sisters on your one day at home, but there was so much to be said,' cried she, pleasantly. 'And when you get into the way of coming, as I hope you will—I hope very much indeed you will'—earnestly—'please remember that we are always here, and that you, and any of you, will be always welcome. Bring a sister, or sisters, when you please; come alone when you please. You will find us under these trees in summer, by the drawing-room fire in winter. Am I asking too much if I beg you not to look upon us as mere acquaintances, but as friends from this day forward? For the sake of your father, you know;' she added in a lowered voice, accompanied by a glance at once tender and significant.

'Lady Blanche'—the young man gathered himself up, and returned the glance with one of deep respect—'you could not ask me anything I should more truly, more gratefully consider as a privilege. Oh, you don't know what it will be to us,' dropping all at once the somewhat old-fashioned demeanour and formal tone for one more animated and spontaneous. 'All our lives have

been spent among strangers, and my poor sisters——' but he had already been very frank about his sisters.

'Why, of course, they want an old body to throw a wing over them,' said Lady Blanche, holding his hand with, had she known it, something of her mother's compelling charm, that charm which had lulled to rest her own and many another's misgivings. The daughter had inherited the softness, the sweetness; but what had in the one been a delusive mockery was in the other a reality.

Before the young man took his departure, an early date was fixed upon for the next meeting.

'Just show him out by the shrubbery gate, my dear'—Lady Blanche pointed to a pathway and looked towards her niece—'and though I am afraid you cannot take the short cut through the park to-day,' again turning to her guest, 'for you would find that gate locked, you can have a key in future. Leonora, remind me.'

'And then I can come as far and meet your sisters,' said Leonora, as she obeyed. 'I can always go anywhere in the park. It will be such fun. We will fix the hour, and there I shall be looking out for them. If they are late, or I am late, we shall abuse each other. Are they punctual girls?'

He was obliged to confess that he did not know.

'I'll soon find out,' quoth she, confidently.

And it was then he noticed what a light, springing step she had, and how every motion reminded him of one of her own deer, whom she pointed out browsing on the sunny western slope.

'They are always there about this time in the afternoon,' said she.

But she only went with him a very little way; the shrubbery gate was all too soon in sight; and as for lingering or seeking to detain her? Lionel literally hurried his adieux.

'He has some other visits to pay,' thought she, with a shade of disappointment; she could have waited a minute.

But she did not see how his quick step slackened directly he was out of sight.

CHAPTER XVIII.

'HANG—DASH—CONFOUND!'

THE sound of merry laughter may fall pleasantly upon the ear, or again it may bear an unfortunate if Scriptural resemblance to the crackling of thorns.

Lionel Colvin had fallen in love at first sight with Leonora Massitur. Her voice was sweet and low, her mirth a strain of purest music—oh, we know all about it, young man, and there is no need to tell us that other people's fun is poor fun, or that they themselves are dull, tiresome, commonplace, making only a farce of being sprightly and amusing.

Down from an exalted region falls poor Lionel plump; and alights at his own garden gate, to be there assailed by what he mentally terms vulgar, noisy peals of merriment. Can it be wondered at that he frowns as he glances within before entering?

Yet an ordinary spectator would find nothing to vex either eye or ear in the appearance of the little party encamped beneath the shade, a party similar in all respects to that Lionel has so lately quitted, and which pleased him so well. Here is just such another cheerful group of talkers and laughers—three pretty girls encircling one contented man—William Farrell, in short, with Bet, Poll, and Georgie in happy attendance, all as serenely satisfied with themselves and each other, as independent of extraneous society, as had been the fair ladies and their companion at Henham Park.

William had called two hours before, taking everybody by surprise, for he had been supposed to be far enough away. It was nearly a week since anything had been seen of him, and during that week Massitur feelings had prevailed primarily with Poll and Georgie, while even Bet, of tougher fibre, had accorded to the new topic more interest than she would have taken in anything else.

Had there been no Billy it would have been even more to her than to her sisters.

A few words and looks undid all. She now chiefly cared for Lionel's having gone to Henham because it was something to tell the visitor, and because, if truth must out, her brother's absence was welcome. When he was there she experienced a restraint and an odd inexplicable anxiety from which at other times she

was free. There was a sense of some one's looking on with cool, dispassionate observation, and hearkening to all that was said, not unkindly perhaps, but still from another standpoint than that of the sisters.

'He is our own Billy, and we all adore him,' Georgie once pronounced; whereat Bet laughed at her, but the laugh hid another feeling.

'Our own Billy'? Yes, that did very well. There could be nothing more with one than with another when 'Our own Billy' summed up the situation. All felt alike, Poll and Georgie and she. Bet usually sat a little behind the others when the circle was formed, and spoke less—less even than Poll—but to be sure it is only fair that younger sisters should come to the front in due course, and Bet had her answer ready when taxed for silence on a special occasion.

'You always tell me I suppress you two. It appears you like being suppressed, then?'

'Is that it?' quoth unsuspecting Georgie.

She had been afraid of a lecture, and taken the initiative; but since Bet was not going to be 'down' upon either herself or Poll for forwardness—a time-honoured grievance—all was right. It was highly agreeable to find now that she might run on as fast as she chose when Billy was present, and that the graver demeanour of her eldest sister did not mean sulks.

'I have to be a little more careful than a child like you,' said Bet, importantly.

'Besides, Mrs. Tom did give him first to me, Bet.'

'Yes, she did.'

'Oh, you own that at last, do you? Is that why you generally let me have the most of him?'

But Bet knows that there are two ways of having the most of a man. William Farrell talks and laughs and chaffs merrily with wild, mischievous, ready-witted Georgie, who is never at a loss for an answer, shines in a passage-of-arms, and sets against her lack of knowledge and cultivation an amount of natural, shrewd ability which often surprises those who know her best.

As a fact, Georgie is what our transatlantic cousins call the smartest of the three. Bet has an infinitely deeper and stronger nature; she thinks, reflects, meditates; but her mind is a slow worker, and, until lately, to intellectual acquirement she has been indifferent. In consequence, she is often content to let others cut in before her when the conversation is general and animated,

but let it not be supposed that my heroine means to be overlooked for all that.

Already, this very afternoon, she has had more than one moment to add to her store of such treasures, and now sits by while the gay chatter runs on with an illumined countenance, an abandonment to peaceful bliss that all at once reveals to Lionel the truth. Instinctively he recognises the look and marks the stricken deer of the herd.

A month, a day ago, and this would have pleased our careful elder brother well enough; now, he tells himself angrily that the Farrells are moneyed, consequential nobodies, with whom he shudders to think of forming a connection. Good Heavens! what has he been about, what have they all been about to let themselves drift into intimacy, still worse into possible matrimony with people so far beneath them? Bet, too; Bet, the eldest and prettiest (Bet had always been the one for him)—Bet, of whom Lady Blanche had spoken so enthusiastically and significantly—he grinds his teeth as his eye takes in her beatified air, and a muttered oath escapes, which is not entirely due to present vexation and disappointment.

Doubtless however these had their share in the gloom which enveloped the young man's heart as he forced himself to approach the group and greet the visitor; since any scene of the kind, with any central figure for its object, would have been distasteful at the moment.

He had been hoping for solitude, counting upon it, secure that as the evening, though warm, was not sultry, and there were no suspicious thunder clouds about, Poll's frequent plea of headache would not be admitted, and she would be marched off to evening service under Bet's disciplinarian wing, together with Georgie, who was never allowed the excuse occasionally accorded her sister.

On first coming to The Nook, both the younger girls had rebelled against this second church-going, but it had availed them nothing.

'What does it matter whether we went before or not? We are going now,' was all Bet deigned to reply.

'But you don't make Lionel go?' tried Poll.

'Men are different. We have got to be more religious,' rejoined Bet, loftily.

Lionel had overheard and smiled to himself. And he had smiled afresh as he thought of poor Bet's arbitrary religion, on

his way home from Henham Park. It would serve him in good stead on this divine evening. He took his watch out and noted the hour with satisfaction as he neared the house. Certainly, yes, certainly she would have swept off the other two and left the coast clear for him; and he would wander up and down in the dusky solitude with his pipe, his blessed pipe, for sole companion and confidant, thinking and dreaming, seeing Leonora and hearing Leonora—oh, hang it all!

For it was at this point in the programme that the burst of merry laughter from the other side of the garden wall crackled so ominously in his ears.

He was at the gate, and shook it open roughly. None of them gone, not one! And a fourth figure looming through the twilight!

‘Hang—dash—confound!’ He has almost to throttle himself lest they hear him. He stamps clandestinely, hid by the gate.

And it is of this quiet, modest, gentle-mannered youth that Lady Blanche is thinking at the moment. Despite herself she cannot keep her thoughts from wandering, and she has heard her old vicar’s sermon so many times before, that even a less engrossing subject might have excused her; she is thinking, we say, of Lionel, her new, delightful Lionel; of what a *dear* face it is, so full of thoughtful earnestness and soul and strength. Back to the far-away days his voice has taken her, the very turn of his head, the bend of his neck, his attitudes, his movements—she credits him with a resemblance all through, and worships accordingly. For all her middle-aged widowhood there are tons of girlish enthusiasm lurking still within that stately breast, and her ladyship, the most frigid figure in the congregation, is simply effervescing with plots and plans that send a bright pink colour into either cheek.

‘Aunt Blanche looks lovely to-night!’ thinks Leonora, with a curious, pleased perception of what has caused the loveliness.

She too is thinking of Lionel, wondering if he is thinking of her?—what he will say of her?—if he will speak of her to his sisters?—if they are likely to repeat—oh, she has a host of things to consider and busy her mind with, all centring in this grave, gentle, reticent new acquaintance.

‘Hang—dash—confound!’ Lionel flings the gate to, and sullenly stalks across the lawn. ‘How d’ye do?’ gruffly to Billy, who on his part nods upward, making no feint of rising from his chair. ‘You haven’t gone to church, then?’ continues

our young man, addressing his sisters in tones that unmistakably demand 'Why not, pray?'

For a wonder it is Poll who replies. Poll generally lets the replying be done for her, but Bet, to whom Lionel has pointedly addressed himself, is picking up a book which has fallen at her side, and as Georgie also is occupied, or affects to be so, Poll has an opportunity.

'It has been such a very hot day, Lionel. And you know what church is on a night like this. We really felt we could not face it.'

'Bet! t us off,' dashed in Georgie. 'There, that's the truth; we never want to go, Poll and I; but Bet makes us. To-night she said we needn't.'

'I am afraid your brother thinks I kept you,' said William Farrell's courteous voice, 'and indeed I am not sure that I did not; but'—turning to him—'I assure you I meant it all right. Your sisters would have found it unendurable inside a crowded, gas-reeking church—I know what we all suffered last Sunday evening!' He had been present, and meant Lionel to know it.

'So you needn't come home looking such daggers at us,' cried the saucy Georgie, recovering; '*you* have had a jolly afternoon; why shouldn't *we*?' and she glanced triumphantly round.

'Yes. Please be kind to us,' said Billy, meekly. ('You young ass!' he muttered to himself.)

Hitherto he had got on well enough with a brother whom he only met at rare intervals, and to whom he was studiously polite, but he read a new look in Lionel's eye. 'Oh, very well'—he shrugged his shoulders mentally.

The situation lasted a full minute; then Lionel turned to go indoors.

He had fancied that questionings and eagerness about Henham and its occupants would be distasteful, and had been ready with vague replies, while yet admitting to himself that something must be conceded to natural curiosity and interest. It would be shabby to snub the girls and tell them nothing. He would dilate upon the picture incident at any rate, and recount what Lady Blanche said and did, how she looked, and what she wore.

Then he could enter upon the croquet question, and make much of future prospects and the one actual, positive invitation—and all of this he had arranged to do in due time; but now the wind was completely taken out of his sails, and he found himself resenting the very absence of that cross-examination

which had been dreaded and prepared for. 'If they don't care to hear, they needn't hear,' he muttered vengefully.

This however was too much.

'Lionel—stop!' It was Georgie who bounded from her place; she had been lying on a rug spread over the grass. 'Lionel,' she cried shrilly, running after him, 'come back. Oh, Lin, how can you be so?—and you know we are dying to hear,' plucking him by the elbow.

'Nonsense, dying!' He strode on.

'But we are,' persisted she, holding fast. 'Do come back. Don't be cross and disagreeable—before Mr. Farrell too!' in a lower tone. 'He'll think it's because he is here.'

'What is he doing here?'

'What you were doing there,' airily. 'Making a Sunday call; and we made him stay on to hear the accounts. We told him where you were gone.'

'What on earth did you do that for? Bragging!'

'It wasn't bragging. How could it be bragging? He asked, and Bet said it as naturally as possible. And we had to tell about the Massiturs coming here, because of course he knows—they all know——'

'They only know what we choose to tell them. And now it will seem as if we were so elated.' They were out of earshot, and the argument was pursued *in camerâ*.

'Is your brother often taken like this?' said Billy, addressing himself urbanely to the two left behind, 'or is it the weather? I felt cross myself this morning, but now a child could knock me down with a feather. Miss Bet, I don't want to go, but if I am in the way——?'

'In the way?' It is Poll who protests most vigorously. Bet's eyes glow in the gathering dusk, and she only looks at him and softly shakes her head.

Billy leans towards her, addresses her, presently talks to her alone. Poll, sitting by, sometimes loses the half of what is said. She cannot get any nearer, for she is sitting on the garden seat, and her sister's chair is a little way off, and Billy, who was between them, has edged his close to it; so that when his head is turned—and it is kept persistently turned—no third person three yards away has a chance.

Once or twice when Poll herself speaks, her remark passes unnoticed. Poor Pollkins feels the evening air grow chilly, and wonders why Georgie ran off and never came back?—thinking

ruefully how much pleasanter it was when they were all talking together, before Lionel came home to break up the party.

She has no desire to engross the visitor, as Bet is doing; she only wants her fair share of attention, and that the conversation should be nice and general. She does think it is not quite fair of Bet to—oh, he is going!

‘Shall we let you know?’ says Bet, in what her sister feels assured is a new voice, a company voice, not the voice of the past half-hour. They have all risen, and still William Farrell’s back is turned and Pollkins feels out in the cold.

Bet however is looking towards her and explaining something, so Poll may as well listen; and as she listens the ruffled feathers of our little brown bird are smoothed.

‘Poll, did you hear? Mr. Farrell is so kind as to invite us all to dine with him at the White Farm? I am sure we should like it very much’ (not in Bet’s natural voice by any means). ‘Should we not, Poll? We are to let Mr. Farrell know which day will suit, because of course Lionel must fix that.’

‘So I have been suggesting that you wait for a good opportunity to ask him about it,’ appended Billy, with smiling significance. ‘Not to-night; something has put him out to-night. Sad to say, we wretched men do get put out at times, and the charming women who belong to us have to suffer for it. But it will pass off and the benign mood return. Brothers with such sisters cannot but be generally benign. Then——’ and as he laughed the admiring audience laughed also.

‘Was *that* what he was talking about?’ put forth Poll thereafter. ‘But he might have said it so that I could hear. I could not hear a word. Just hum—hum—hum; and you spoke as low as he; as if you were a couple of conspirators.’ She was quite reassured, and continued briskly: ‘Let’s make Georgie guess our secret. She is simply aching to get inside the White Farm. The Massiturs put her off it for a little; and so they did me. And you too, I suppose? But now, Billy for ever! We’ll walk up that old lane straight to the front door this time. No sneaking beneath the bridge. And we’ll inspect the table, and the chair, and the window curtains. Next time we look from the fields it will all appear different; we shall know what the room is like inside.’ And she prattled on.

Once or twice during the remainder of the evening she looked at Bet, her look conveying: ‘Has the time come? Has the benign mood arrived which we are to take advantage of?’

Bet however remained obstinately silent.

She could distinguish between a penitent Lionel, somewhat annoyed with himself and anxious to wipe out the remembrance of an ugly scene by a little extra display of sociability and loquacity, and a Lionel whose feelings had undergone an actual change with regard to the point at issue.

As long as Henham was the theme the former's tongue was unloosed, and even beneath a raking fire of interrogation and conjecture he remained mild and placable; but he made no allusion to William Farrell, and let pass any that dropped from the lips of others.

At last: 'You *were* rude to him, Lionel,' said Poll obtusely; for she had not the wit to see that her sisters were carefully restraining themselves, Georgie having had it out with her brother, and Bet not daring to spring what might prove to be a mine. 'I never saw you so rude to anyone,' she was continuing, when a rasping voice interposed: 'It is not for *you* to teach Lionel how to behave,' quoth Bet, and Georgie at the words turned and looked at the speaker.

Lionel's brow, which had begun to gloom, cleared again. Bet's championship was inexpressibly welcome and hopeful; surprising, too; not at all what he had anticipated. Was he wrong then? Surely, unless he were, she would never have evinced such spirit, such quick resentment of Poll's accusation. He must be wrong.

In regard to Pollkins, she might say what she chose, and he even laughed as he retorted jocularly, 'I was rude, was I? So Georgie told me; but it does rile a fellow to come in and find a lot of people gaping and staring and looking so jolly comfortable and at home, when you are hot and tired and want to be quiet. Bill Farrell is well enough; it was not him I found fault with, but with his being here. He might have had the sense to go before I came home.'

'Don't you think it would have been he who was rude in that case?' said Bet, quietly.

'You mean to me?'

'Yes, to you. The head of the house.'

'But it is you girls he comes to see.'

'He may come to see us and yet pay you proper respect. Had you come home earlier, I dare say he would have gone earlier; as it was, he could only have——'

'Meant to be civil, eh?' said he, as she paused.

'I think he wished to stay; and to wait till you came in was a very proper and natural pretext,' said Bet, steadily. 'We asked him to stay. Even if he had not wished to do so he could hardly have refused.'

'Oh!'

'So now for the invitation;' Poll sat forward in her chair and fixed her eye on Bet, while Georgie equally expectant—she had heard the news in the meantime—forebore to forestall her sister. Lionel had given them all a fright, and no risks must be run.

He now sat placidly smoking, and could a better opportunity occur?

'Why don't you do it?' Georgie slipped off her seat on the window-sill and approached her sister's ear; Poll, feeling herself a born diplomatist, called off Lionel's attention from the two as she perceived this.

'Let me, then,' urged Georgie, as though something had been said. But nothing had.

Bet was writhing impotently. Oh, if they would let her alone, not force her to speak of him, of it, of anything that might re-awaken that lulled suspicion on her brother's part! She knew that suspicion was but lulled; was ready to spring up again at any moment; and that if she could not command easy unconcern—— 'Shall I?' persisted Georgie. In desperation a sign of assent was made and taken advantage of on the instant.

And as it is only in books that people see each other changing colour and starting and trembling, for in real life these signs of perturbation are rarely visible, or if visible are as often as not misunderstood, no one was the least the wiser for all the poor girl went through during the next quarter of an hour.

First of all Lionel was indifferent, absolutely unconscious that an event of the first magnitude had taken place.

Then he was torpidly unpropitious. Could they not get out of it? It would be an awful bore. What could have put such a thing into the man's head?

Suddenly he blazed up. It was downright confounded impertinence; just the sort of thing one might expect from people like the Farrells.

Side by side Poll and Georgie fought the battle, perhaps the first battle they had ever fought in the interests of all three without Bet for a leader, and staunch little warriors that they were, they neither then nor thereafter reviled the coward for her defalcation.

'I did feel mean,' said she, afterwards; 'but you did far better without me than with me'—this was when the field was won. 'I get so very angry,' pleaded Bet, 'and I can't take things as either of you can. If I had allowed myself to speak when Lionel said Mr. Farrell was—was——'

'Pooh! I didn't care a pop what he said Billy was. Billy can hold his own. I'd like to see a tussle between him and Lionel. I think I know who would win. The only way is to laugh.'

'But I can't laugh.'

'What do you mean? Can't laugh!'

'I can't laugh when people I like are maligned. It is not only that I feel hot and cold and furious, but if I were to laugh I should be treacherous as well. Georgie, don't think me unkind, but once or twice when you led Lionel on, and laughed with him, telling him how we once——'

'I did not tell him about the mock Billy; I did not tell him that.'

'You told him that we made up nicknames and mimicked him.'

'What if I did? It was only to show how differently we feel now; and I can tell you nothing made more impression upon Lionel than those very things you blame me for. He roared at the idea of our all being trotted out by Mrs. Tom in turn, and from that minute he began to waver. You saw he did. He was quite nice about Billy directly I said he was our own Billy, and that not one of us was fonder of him than the others. When it came to that, he agreed to the dinner straight away.'

And she had said it in good faith, little thinking, little dreaming!

Bet drew a sudden quick sigh, then smiled upon her sister, drew her within her arm, and twined around her fingers the clustering tendrils on the smooth young brow as if it were a child's, as if the child were her own child—her little Georgie of long ago.

Georgie nestled contentedly. 'We have had a nice day, haven't we, Bet?'

'Yes, dear.'

'A little breezy towards the close; the wind got up at sunset,' laughing softly; 'but a good blow does no one any harm, and clears the air. Lionel is all right now; and I don't think Billy really minded, do you?'

'He spoke most kindly of Lionel.'

'When Lin and I were away, having it out? Poll told me you and Billy had a sort of confidential business. Pollkins was inclined to be jealous.'

'People can talk more freely when—when——'

'Two's company, three's none, of course. And Poll and I had had our innings; it was only fair that you should have yours. Lionel had had his, too—at Henham,' proceeded the speaker in a satisfied tone. 'He needn't have been cross with us; however we won't hark back. And we have two invitations—two delightful invitations for one week. Think of it! It makes one giddy, such a whirl. They will be so different,' continued she, after a pause of pleasurable anticipation. 'Of course, going to the farm will be fun—dining there, too! But dining at Henham, Bet—think of that! How glorious we shall feel, setting out at four o'clock and telling Simmins we shan't be home till eleven, and are to be sent for then. Solon must be brought in for good now, Lionel says, as we shall want him whenever we go to Henham—at least, whenever we stay on at Henham. I do love to "stay on" at a house; don't you? Lionel says it was Lady Blanche's idea that we should walk there and drive back. He seemed to think it so polite and respectful—those were his words—not to offer her own carriages and horses as if we were poor people and had to be fetched and carried, but to treat poor old Solon as if he were quite a dignified and creditable animal—though I dare say her swell grooms will sniff at him. And oh, Bet, he does want clipping.'

'Lionel is going to see to that,' said Bet.

'He'll see to anything with Henham in the question,' responded Georgie, shrewdly. 'Do you know what he is doing now? Looking at the garden wall to see how it can be raised. I saw him go down the walk as we came upstairs, and he is not come in yet. Well, he has got his wish at last; he has always been hankering after some real people for us to make friends with; and if he will only fall in love with Leonora——'

'Georgie, dear, don't be foolish. We are all a little upset by this good fortune—it *is* good fortune, and I don't deny it—that our dear father's old love-story should have brought us such kind friends and a pleasant house to go to.'

'You yourself said to Lady Blanche that she could not think how much it would be to us.'

'So I did; and I do think it will be a great deal; but I want us all to understand,' said Bet, firmly, 'that however good and kind

the Massiturs may be, there *are* other people, and we are not going to throw off everyone else because of them. We could not be so ungrateful, so horrible.'

'Why, of course not. What are you thinking of? Whom should we throw off? Billy?'

'All the Farrells. All our former friends. You can see that Lionel is already inclined to drop them——'

'He never was anything else, you know. It was we who said we must have some sort of society.'

'And having said it, we'll stick to it. And having been glad enough to go to Beech Hall and Hay Farm and Westlands——'

'Oh, not Westlands. I never could abide that Emma.'

'Mr. Farrell says she is a dear little woman, so bright and amusing.'

'She may be to him; precious little brightness and amusingness comes our way.'

'If Lionel were to have his head turned by Leonora Massitur,' said Bet, resolutely returning to the point, 'anyone could see what would be the end of it. He would be drawn away, and would try to draw us away from everyone who is not on a level with the Massiturs; he would estrange others who might have cared for us, and with whom we might have been happy; he would affront the whole neighbourhood in so far as we are concerned. I read all this in his manner towards our visitor this evening; and, at the last, he would find—oh, Georgie, I cannot bear to say it, or to think it—but I *know* it would be so, if he should be so blind, so rash as to follow this will o' the wisp, he would find himself one day shut out in the dark with a bunch of withered flowers—the rose he wore to-day——'

'Bet! dear Bet!'

'He is so like dear father,' sobbed Bet. 'Lady Blanche broke *his* heart—oh, I mean no harm of her; she was very young, and her mother, her own mother, told her lies, and she believed them. But why did father look so high? Could he not have been content with——?'

'Bet, our father!'

'I know,' said Bet, admitting the reproach; 'I ought not to say it, but I often feel it. She was too far above him; he might have known the world better. Lionel must not make the same mistake; I say he *must* not'—passionately.

'All right, he shan't;' Georgie stroked her sister's wet hand, and laid her cheek upon it. 'He shan't, never you fear. I'll put

him off. I'll say such things of Leonora—let me see—I'll begin by laughing at her hair, I'll call it a tow wig; then I'll say she has a putty face whose pink has run in the wash—because, you know, she is pale, and the heat made her streaky that day—very likely she will be streaky again; then those long fingers of hers, I'll call them claws——'

'Georgie, are you in earnest?'

'What am I to do, then? He knows I admire her now. If I don't turn round and attack her at every single point, it will be too late.'

'I don't know that there is anything we can do,' said Bet, mournfully; 'and certainly if you want to urge Lionel on, you could not set about it in a better way than by running down the girl you are afraid of. It would be too palpably absurd. All I wanted to say was that while we are glad to go to Henham——'

'Glad! We would crawl there on all fours, and wriggle in through the water-pipes.'

'——we are not going to be carried away by it. We are not going to indulge in wild, extravagant dreams about it. We are not going to encourage Lionel——'

'Faith, he needs no encouraging.'

'Come to bed.' Suddenly Bet hopped down from her high horse, and shook off her satellite. 'I hope, miss, your speech and manners will benefit, whatever else does not, by intercourse with your superiors. How would you have liked Leonora Massitur to hear you say "Faith"?''

'She'd sooner have heard that than some of the rest,' retorted Georgie, coolly. 'Tow wig, eh?'

'Come to bed this instant,' said Bet, peremptorily.

(*To be continued.*)

At the Gate.

THE monastery towers, as pure and fair
 As virgin vows, reached up white hands to Heaven ;
 The walls, to guard the hidden heart of prayer,
 Were strong as sin, and white as sin forgiven ;
 And there came holy men, by world's woe driven ;
 And all about the gold-green meadows lay
 Flower-decked, like children dear that keep May-holiday.

'Here,' said the Abbot, 'let us spend our days,
 Days sweetened by the lilies of pure prayer,
 Hung with white garlands of the rose of praise;
 And, lest the World should enter with her snare—
 Enter and laugh, and take us unaware
 With her red rose, her purple and her gold—
 Choose we a stranger's hand the porter's keys to hold.'

They chose a beggar from the world outside
 To keep their worldward door for them, and he,
 Filled with a humble and adoring pride,
 Built up a wall of proud humility
 Between the monastery's sanctity
 And the poor, foolish, humble folk who came
 To ask for love and care, in the dear Saviour's name.

For when the poor crept to the guarded gate
 To ask for succour, when the tired asked rest,
 When weary souls, bereft and desolate,
 Craved comfort, when the murmur of the oppressed
 Surged round the grove where Prayer had made her nest,
 The porter bade such take their griefs away,
 And at some other door their bane and burden lay.

'For this,' he said, 'is the white house of prayer,
 Where day and night the holy voices rise
 Through the chill trouble of our earthly air,
 And enter at the gate of Paradise.
 Trample no more our flower-fields in such wise,
 Nor crave the alms of our deep-laden bough;
 The prayers of holy men are alms enough, I trow.'

So, seeing that no sick or sorrowing folk
 Came ever to be healed or comforted,
 The Abbot to his brothers gladly spoke :
 'God has accepted our poor prayers,' he said ;
 'Over our land His answering smile is spread.
 He has put forth His strong and loving hand,
 And sorrow and sin and pain have ceased in all the land.

'So make we yet more rich our hymns of praise,
 Warm we our prayers against our happy heart.
 Since God hath taken the gift of all our days
 To make a spell that bids all wrong depart,
 Has turned our praise to balm for the world's smart,
 Fulfilled of prayer and praise be every hour,
 For God transfigures praise, and transmutes prayer, to power.'

So went the years. The flowers blossomed now
 Untrampled by the dusty, weary feet ;
 Unbroken hung the green and golden bough,
 For none came now to ask for fruit or meat,
 For ghostly food, or common bread to eat ;
 And dreaming, praying, the monks were satisfied,
 Till, God remembering him, the beggar-porter died.

When they had covered up the foolish head,
 And on the blind and loving heart heaped clay,
 'Which of us, brothers, now,' the Abbot said,
 'Will face the world, to keep the world away ?'
 But all their hearts were hard with prayer, and 'Nay,'
 They cried, 'ah, bid us not our prayers to leave ;
 Ah, father, not to-day, for this is Easter Eve.'

And, while they murmured, to their midst there came
A beggar, saying, 'Brothers, peace, be still!
I am your Brother, in our Father's name,
And I will be your porter, if ye will,
Guarding your gate with what I have of skill.'
So all they welcomed him and closed the door,
And gat them gladly back unto their prayers once more.

But, lo! no sooner did the prayer arise,
A golden flame athwart the chancel dim,
Than came the porter crying, 'Haste, arise!
A sick old man waits you to tend on him;
And many wait—a knight whose wound gapes grim,
A red-stained man, with red sins to confess,
A mother pale, who brings her child for you to bless.'

The brothers hastened to the gate, and there
With unaccustomed hand and voice they tried
To ease the body's pain, the spirit's care;
But, ere the task was done, the porter cried:
'Behold, the Lord sets your gate open wide,
In here be starving folk who must be fed,
And little ones that cry for love and daily bread!'

And, with each slow-foot hour, came ever a throng
Of piteous wanderers, sinful folk and sad,
And still the brothers ministered, but long
The day seemed, with no prayer to make them glad;
No holy, meditative joys they had,
No moment's brooding-place could poor prayer find,
And all those hearts to heal and all those wounds to bind.

And when the crowded, sunlit day at last
Left the field lonely with its trampled flowers,
Into the chapel's peace the brothers passed
To quell the memory of those hurrying hours.
'Our holy time,' they said, 'once more is ours!
Come, let us pay our debt of prayer and praise,
Forgetting in God's light the darkness of man's ways!'

But, ere their voices reached the first psalm's end,
They heard a new, strange, rustling round their house ;
Then came the porter : ' Here comes many a friend,
Pushing aside your budding orchard boughs ;
Come, brothers, justify your holy vows.
Here be God's patient, poor, four-footed things
Seek healing at God's well, whence loving-kindness springs.'

Then cried the Abbot in a vexed amaze,
' Our brethren we must aid, if 'tis God's will ;
But the wild creatures of the forest ways
Himself God heals with His Almighty skill.
And charity is good, and love—but still
God shall not look in vain for the white prayers
We send on silver feet to climb the starry stairs ;

' For, of all worthy things, prayer has most worth,
It rises like sweet incense up to Heaven,
And from God's hand falls back upon the earth,
Being of heavenly bread the accepted leaven.
Through prayer is virtue saved and sin forgiven ;
In prayer the impulse and the force are found
That bring in purple and gold the fruitful seasons round.

' For prayer comes down from Heaven in the sun
That giveth life and joy to all things made ;
Prayer falls in rain to make broad rivers run
And quicken the seeds in earth's brown bosom laid ;
By prayer the red-hung branch is earthward weighed,
By prayer the barn grows full, and full the fold,
For by man's prayer God works His wonders manifold.'

The porter bowed his head to the reproof ;
But when the echo of the night's last prayer
Died in the mystery of the vaulted roof,
A whispered memory in the hallowed air,
The Abbot turned to find, still standing there,
The porter, and his face was still bowed down
As when it humbly bent before the Abbot's frown.

'Brother,' the porter spoke, 'I crave your leave
To leave you—for to-night I journey far.
But I have kept your gate this Easter Eve,
And now your house to Heaven shines like a star
To show the Angels where God's children are ;
And in this day your house has served God more
Than in the praise and prayer of all its days before.

'Yet I must leave you, though I fain would stay,
For there are other gates I go to keep
Of houses round whose walls, long day by day,
Shut out of hope and love, poor sinners weep—
Barred folds that keep out God's poor wandering sheep—
I must teach these that gates where God comes in
Must not be shut at all to pain, or want, or sin.

'The voice of prayer is very soft and weak,
And sorrow and sin have voices very strong ;
Prayer is not heard in Heaven when those twain speak,
The voice of prayer faints in the voice of wrong
By the just man endured—oh, Lord, how long ?—
If ye would have your prayers in Heaven be heard,
Look that wrong clamour not with too intense a word.

'But when true love is shed on want and sin,
Their cry is changed, and grows to such a voice
As clamours sweetly at Heaven to be let in—
Such sound as makes the saints in Heaven rejoice ;
Pure gold of prayer, purged of the vain alloys
Of idleness—that is the sound most dear
Of all the earthly sounds God leans from Heaven to hear.

'Oh, brother, I must leave thee, and for me
The work is heavy, and the burden great.
Thine be this charge I lay upon thee : See
That never again stands barred thy abbey gate ;
Look that God's poor be not left desolate ;
Ah me ! that chidden my shepherds needs must be,
When my poor wandering sheep have so great need of me.

' Brother, forgive thy Brother if he chide,
Thy Brother loves thee—and has loved—for see
The nails are in my hands, and in my side
The spear-wound ; and the thorns weigh heavily
Upon my brow—brother, I died for thee—
For thee, and for my sheep that are astray,
And rose to live for thee, and them, on Easter Day !'

' My Master and my Lord !' the Abbot cried.
But, where that Face had been, shone the new day ;
Only on the marble by the Abbot's side,
Where those dear Feet had stood, a lily lay—
A lily white for the white Easter Day.
He sought the gate—no sorrow clamoured there—
And, not till then, he dared to sink his soul in prayer.

And from that day himself he kept the gate
Wide open ; and the poor from far and wide,
The weary, and wicked, and disconsolate,
Came there for succour and were not denied ;
The sick were healed, the repentant sanctified ;
And from their hearts rises more prayer and praise
Than ever the abbey knew in all its prayer-filled days.

And there the heavenly vision comes no more,
Only, each Easter now, a lily sweet
Lies white and dewy on the chancel floor
Where once had stood the beloved wounded Feet ;
And the old Abbot feels the nearing beat
Of wings that bring him leave at last to go
And meet his Master, where the immortal lilies grow.

E. NESBIT.

Johnson's Monument.

IT is rare, but not quite unknown, that from Australia information should come with respect to matters that would seem especially to belong to London. Nearly fifty years ago there was discovered behind an old press in the office of the *Prothonotary*, in Sydney, the diary of a certain Rev. Dr. Thomas Campbell, who had travelled from Ireland to London chiefly to see the 'Great Cham of Literature,' Dr. Johnson. Lord Macaulay¹ showed a keen interest in the discovery, though it must be acknowledged that after all not much new light was thrown on the character of the Dictator of Letters. In the same city, in the library of a collector of all things that concern early Australian history, I recently lighted upon a couple of letters and some memoranda with respect to a controversy that took place more than a century ago, whether the monument to Dr. Johnson should be erected in Westminster Abbey or in 'streaming London's central roar,' in St. Paul's Cathedral. Little is to be gleaned on the subject from books. The question of the decoration of St. Paul's is now once more arousing not a little interest in artistic circles in London; perhaps a small portion of that interest may be spared for the older controversy. A joke of Burke's, made during the discussion, and a disinterested action on the part of Sir Joshua Reynolds are at least deserving of attention.

First, however, a word as to the letters and memoranda finding their way to Sydney. With the exception of a letter from Mr. William Windham, they are in the handwriting of Sir Joseph Banks. A curious fate has befallen Sir Joseph and his memory. Prominent in his lifetime, he has fallen into undeserved oblivion. The first to make a scientific voyage round the world, and for over forty-one years sitting in Newton's chair as President of the Royal Society, he was long the adviser of the English ministry upon all

¹ *Edinburgh Review*, October 1859.

matters concerned with science or exploration—a very Mæcenas in helping the young or the poor, whether English or foreign, towards scientific research. It might, therefore, have been prophesied that his life and letters would long ago have appeared in two portly volumes octavo. Only accident seems to have hindered this natural result. It was at first intended that the biography should be written by Robert Brown, the eminent botanist, who, appointed by Banks, went to Australia with Flinders, and afterwards lived with Sir Joseph in Soho Square. Sir Joseph Hooker says: 'Age and infirmities interfered with his [Brown's] prosecution of this work.' When Banks died, Brown was exactly forty-seven; so it must have been infirmities rather than age. Brown lived thirty-eight years longer, but had soon shirked the task. Before 1833—that is, within thirteen years of the death of Sir Joseph Banks, the materials had been handed over to Mr. Dawson Turner, F.R.S., the maternal grandfather of Sir Joseph Hooker; but the life remained unwritten. Next an attempt was made to induce Mr. Bell, the Secretary of the Royal Society, to accept the office. In Hooker's preface to the journal of Banks on the *Endeavour* voyage, whence this history of the attempt to produce the biography is drawn, a bibliographic letter from Mr. Carruthers gives a further list of those who were asked to undertake the life—Earl Stanhope (whose grandson is now the Governor of New South Wales, where Banks was so early a visitor), Mr. Colquhoun, Mr. John Ball, Mr. Daydon Jackson. Yet for all the number of the invited, no satisfactory life of Sir Joseph Banks has been written, though, of course, many short sketches exist, as, for instance, that by Lord Brougham in *Statesmen and Men of Science in the Reign of George the Third*. These contain interesting stories, such as whet the appetite for more.

It probably remains for some Australian, who knows what an important part Banks played in the early history of the colony of New South Wales, to revive the memory of the great services of Sir Joseph Banks to the colony, to Great Britain, to science, and to mankind. Unfortunately, through an action of the late Lord Brabourne, many of the materials have been dispersed. Though much is scattered, much abides. In the British Museum, at the Royal Society, in the Record Office, documents exist; in many volumes of reminiscences, in Boswell and in Peter Pindar, here a little and there a little, fragments can be picked up. Meanwhile, collectors in Sydney who appreciate his importance are picking up autographs of Banks. It was in the hands of such a collector,

a genuine Banks enthusiast, that I found the relics about the Johnson monument.

Boswell tells about the first meeting of the great Doctor with the young adventurer and his friend Solander. It was at dinner at the house of Sir Joshua Reynolds; and the next morning Johnson wrote a note to Mr. Banks, sending a motto for the goat which had been twice round the world, and remarking what pleasure he had derived from the conversation. At a little later date Mr. Banks was elected a member of the Club, often called the Literary Club, or, from its founder, Johnson's Club. Here and elsewhere Banks must have enjoyed many opportunities of intercourse with the Doctor. For six years Banks was President of the Royal Society ere his honoured friend died. He acted as a pall-bearer at his funeral.

Dr. Johnson died in December 1784, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. During his last illness, Boswell tells us, 'he asked Sir John Hawkins, one of his executors, where he should be buried, and on being answered, "Doubtless in Westminster Abbey," seemed to feel a satisfaction very natural to a poet, and, indeed, in my opinion, very natural to every man of any imagination, who has no family sepulchre in which he can be laid with his fathers.' 'The Boswell' was evidently himself proud that he possessed such a sepulchre, and did not need to be buried in the Abbey! Proposals for a monument to Johnson's memory were naturally at once set on foot. Malone says they were commenced by the Literary Club, but certainly appeal was soon made to a wider circle.

Of the characteristic fate of one application for a subscription we know from a letter of Horace Walpole.¹ Partly upon general, political and social grounds, and partly because of the treatment of Gray in the *Lives of the Poets*, Walpole could not away with Dr. Johnson. After telling Miss Berry how Boswell tried to obtain information from him about Gray, before Johnson wrote the offending life, Walpole continues:—'After the Doctor's death, Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Boswell sent an ambling circular letter to me, begging subscriptions for a monument for him—the two last, I think, impertinently, for they could not but know my opinion, and could not suppose I would contribute to a monument for one who had endeavoured, poor soul! to degrade my friend's superlative poetry. I would not deign to write an answer; but sent down word by my footman, as I would have done to parish

¹ *Walpole's Letters* (Cunningham's edition), vol. ix., p. 319.

officers with a brief, that I would not subscribe.' The process was evidently different to that of to-day, when the circulars come by post, and obliging waste-paper baskets swallow all those addressed to those who do not mean to give. It is a pity, however, that the form of circular has not survived, that we might form an opinion how a circular would *amble*.

Such matters as collections do not proceed with great rapidity, even when for a monument in honour of a man so distinguished as Dr. Johnson. In his *Life of Goldsmith*, Sir James Prior mentions that amongst Malone's papers submitted to him he found a bundle of letters showing how hard Malone found it to gather in the subscriptions towards the monument that were promised by members of the club, who apparently held the doctrine, *Base is the slave that pays*. If this was the case with the inner circle of Johnsonians, how much more difficult must it have been to raise the funds from the outer !

As far as dates are concerned, the next mention of the monument is in a letter from Boswell to his friend Temple, one of the letters preserved in so strange a way from the degraded fate of wrapping up parcels of small articles purchased in a shop at Boulogne. In November 1789 thus writes Boswell:—' Last Sunday (29th) I dined with him (Malone), with Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir Joseph Banks, Mr. Metcalfe, Mr. Windham, Mr. Courtenay, and young Mr. Burke, being a select number of Dr. Johnson's friends, to settle as to the effectual measures for having a monument erected to him in Westminster Abbey. It is to be a whole-length statue of him by Bacon, which will cost 600*l*. Sir Joshua and Sir William Scott, his executors, are to send circular letters to a number of people, of whom we make a list, as supposing they will contribute. Several of us subscribed five guineas each ; Sir Joshua and Metcalfe ten guineas each ; Courtenay and young Burke two guineas each. Will you not be one of us, were it but for one guinea ?'

The letter goes on to speak of anarchy in France, where the curtain had risen on the drama of the French Revolution, though it was still 1789, and therefore only in the first act. Sixteen months later appears first mention of the proposal to change the place of the monument from the Abbey to St. Paul's. On March 26, 1791, a meeting of the committee was held at Baxter's. Mr. William Windham, unable to be present, wrote the following letter, which is in the collection in Sydney :—

' Mar. 26.

' MY DEAR BANKS,—Having before blundered and now forgot, I am afraid I must be left out of the consultation, it being hardly possible now, that, unshaved and undressed as I am at present, I should be with you in time. I went last Saturday, having mistaken the day; to-day it quite slipped my memory. I will come as soon as I can; but your consultation will have ended, I hope, long before; and in whatever decision it ends, I shall be very well satisfied. Perhaps I may state in five words all that I should say if I were to be present. The difficulty with respect to the declaration in the advertisements need not, I think, at all stand in the way. Nobody probably advanced his money on the one supposition that would not be equally ready to do on the other. If any such there are, it is easy to contrive that he (*sic*) may have an opportunity of resuming his subscription.

'The question then comes to be, merely, which is most desirable, and if the fact should be that more scope can be given in St. Paul's to the skill of the artist, a foundation laid for the decoration of that church by monuments, and a more handsome and striking monument be in this instance produced, I really don't see that the fancy, which I certainly shared in originally, in favour of Westminster Abbey, is of weight to determine us on that side. I think the whole question, however, of little consequence, or so doubtful that I shall be very glad to have it determined by others.—Yrs. W. W.'

On the back of the letter is written by Banks:—

'St. Paul. Mr. Burke, Sir Joshua.

'Westminster Abbey. Mr. Metcalfe.

'This day fortnight, to meet again here at the same hour. March 26, Baxter's.'

It is clear that at this meeting opinions were greatly divided. On a small piece of paper the following memoranda in Banks's handwriting are labelled 'Arguments used on March 26.' They are probably the heads of the speech that Sir Joseph made at the committee meeting.

'I protest against Dr. Johnson's monument being erected in St. Paul's. Because the Doctor's body lies in Westminster Abbey; because I verily believe it was, when he was living, his wish that his monument might be erected there; because his executors have engaged with the Dean and Chapter to erect it there, which engagement has been confirmed by the subscribers; because the subscribers gave their money under an engagement it

should be erected there; because this committee have not been invested by the general meeting with power to alter their resolution of erecting it there, or with any power whatever except that of procuring money.'

On the date after the meeting, however, Sir Joseph wrote the following impartial letter to Mr. Malone, at that time in Dublin. The draft preserved is in the handwriting of Sir Joseph Banks.

Letter to Mr. Malone.

' March 27, 1791.

' MY DEAR SIR,—I am required by our colleagues in the Committee appointed to provide money for erecting a monument to the memory of Johnson to request your opinion respecting the most proper place for it—Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's. If you favour us with your sentiments, I have no doubt they will have great weight in our decision, which we hope to make on the 9th day of April next.

' Sir Joshua, who prefers St. Paul's, says that the honour as well as the interests of the arts are materially at stake, and will receive great advantage if we set the example of a monument in a church which has hitherto been fallow for the harvest of the chisel; that Westminster is already so crowded that it would be a deadly sin against taste to increase the squeeze of tombs there; and that St. Paul's is the most honorable station for the monument of a great man. Burke says waggishly that this is borrowing from Peter to give to Paul, but he supports Sir Joshua fully and firmly.

' On the other hand, the supporters of St. Peter say they are engaged to the body of Johnson and the Public, and to the Dean and Chapter to erect it there; that they ardently wish to make an end of a business that has been kept in suspense so very long; and lastly that they fear their funds, between 7 & 800 Pounds, will be very short of the necessary expence of such a monument as the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's will require, which they understand is to be of colossal dimensions. This last argument however Sir Joshua has answered by declaring if by further solicitation, in which he expects the Committee to cooperate, sufficient money cannot be raised, he will himself furnish it. Thus stood the matter, when we parted last night. Pray let us hear from you in time. You will essentially oblige us all and none more than

' Your faithfull servt.,

' J. B.

The only trace of what Malone's answer to this letter may have been is in the following remark in Prior's *Life of Malone* :— 'St. Paul's, as he (Malone) expressed it, was too modern, too cold and raw to lie comfortably in, but in a century or two hence would look more habitable!' On the back of Banks's draft of letter is written :—

'Present at the Committee—Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Burke, Mr. Wyndham, Mr. Metcalfe, Mr. Boswell, Sir Wm. Scott, Sir J. B.' But it is by no means clear on which day these seven met, nor whether the meeting called for April 9 took place. If it did, it was again adjourned to April 16, when the sculptor also was present. For that occasion also Banks gives the heads of a speech :—

'It is far from impossible that after the erection of Dr. J.'s monument in St. Paul's, a future Dean and Chapter may change their minds respecting the erection of future monuments, and pleading Sir Christopher Wren's deprecations, either remove it or prevent any others from being placed with it. Westminster is the Repository of the illustrious dead. St. Paul's may be, but the decision is not by any means yet made. (Arguments used on the 15th of April, 1791.)'

There is also this important

'Memorandum made at the Meeting.'

'Sir Joshua Reynolds undertakes that, in case sufficient money is not subscribed to defray the increased expense of erecting Dr. Johnson's monument in St. Paul's, that he will pay the sum wanting, and Mr. Bacon undertakes to erect the monument upon Sir Joshua's credit. Declared by Sir Joshua and agreed by Mr. Bacon on the 15th of April.'

This generosity of Sir Joshua settled the question with the committee, though it is said that two of its members resigned in consequence of the decision. Probably, from the arguments used by him, Sir Joseph Banks was one of the two. The monument was placed in St. Paul's Cathedral, near one of the central pillars under the Dome. It was not, after all, the first monument in St. Paul's. That honour belongs to John Howard, the philanthropist, who died in 1790; and his statue was from the hand of the same sculptor, Bacon. On the suggestion of Sir Joshua the Royal Academy elected a committee to advise the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's to regulate the disposition of the monuments, examine sculptors' models, and determine the magnitude of the figures. A little later the Academy voted 100*l.* towards the

monument of Johnson, on the ground that he had held the appointment of Professor of Ancient Literature to the Academy. It was said that King George III. disapproved of this expenditure of the funds of the Academy, but surely not from any disapproval of Johnson. An elaborate defence of the vote by Reynolds is given in his life by the artist Leslie and Tom Taylor.

The propriety of erecting monuments in St. Paul's Cathedral had been frequently discussed during the previous twenty years. Reynolds steadily maintained that monuments were needed to set off the architecture of St. Paul's. In his *Journey to Flanders and Holland*, he says: 'Sculpture languishes for the same reason, being not with us made subservient to our religion, as it is with the Roman Catholics. Almost the only demand for considerable works of sculpture arises from the monuments erected to eminent men. . . . Westminster Abbey is already full; and if the House of Commons should vote another monument at the public expense, there is no place, no proper place certainly, in the Abbey, in which it can be placed. . . . While this Gothick structure is encumbered and overloaded with ornaments which have no agreement or correspondence with the taste and style of the building, St. Paul's looks forlorn and desolate, or at least destitute of ornaments suited to the magnificence of the fabrick. There are places designed by Sir Christopher Wren for monuments, which might become a noble ornament to the building if properly adapted to their situation.'

It must now be added that the third monument in St. Paul's was that of Sir Joshua Reynolds himself. Within less than twelve months of the handsome offer made by the good Sir Joshua, that great painter laid aside his brush for ever. Death was indeed reaping a rich harvest amongst those engaged in this matter. Boswell died in 1795; Burke in 1797, the latter's death being immediately preceded by that of the son whom Boswell in his letter called 'young Burke.' Bacon, the sculptor of the monument, died a century ago in 1799. Many a monument has been placed in St. Paul's since, and it is indeed fortunate that the wise counsel of the eminent painter prevailed. It is fitting that a man of such influence as Johnson, the dictator over the English language, and in his day the reigning chief of the English world of letters, should afterwards have to keep him company the greatest of English soldiers and 'the greatest sailor since our world began.' 'Johnson might be well received as the representative of the literature of England.'¹

EDWARD E. MORRIS.

¹ Dean Milman, *Annals of St. Paul's*, p. 481.

A Giotto of the Coteswolds.

WHEN Mary Cardross first saw Jethro he was six years old, and still wore petticoats. He was not particularly small for his age, and his appearance was, to say the least of it, peculiar. A cotton frock, made with skirt and body like a housemaid's morning dress, reached to his ankles; and he seemed to have very little underneath, for this outer garment hung limp and straight from waist to heel, except on Sundays, when, fresh from the hands of his aunt, it stuck out all round like a lamp-shade. His hair, cropped very short round the edges, was several inches long on the crown. Mrs. Gegg, by courtesy his 'aunt,' did not even put a basin on his head by way of guide in the shearing, but, brushing all the hair forward from the centre of the crown, laid the scissors against his forehead, and cut the hair close to the skin all round. It grew again quickly, and stuck out above his temples like a new straw thatch.

'Isn't he rather a big boy for petticoats?' Mary asked, as her landlady removed the supper, pausing at intervals to explain Jethro's presence under her roof.

'Yes, 'e be a biggish boy, but I baint a-goin' to be at no expense for 'im as I can 'elp. 'E can wait cum Christmas for 'is trowsies. 'E ought to be thankful as 'e weren't tuk to the workus, an' me only 'is mother's cousin, though 'e *do* call me haunt. 'E be a great expense, and I've 'ad 'im this two year. The most onandiest, nothingly child you ever see—always a-scribblin' and a-messin' and moonin.' I don't set no store by Jethro, I can tell you, miss! 'E's got to be brought up 'ard to hearn 'is own livin'—and Mrs. Gegg paused breathless. Mary said nothing, but she felt rather sorry for Jethro.

Had Mrs. Gegg lived anywhere but in the lovely lonely Coteswold village perched like a smiling fastness in the midst of beech-clad hills, reached only by the loosest and worst of roads, she would hardly have dared to dress a six-year boy in such extra-

ordinary fashion. Public opinion would have been too strong for her. But Nookham, with its dozen cottages, lived and let live in easy apathy, and Jethro in bitterness of spirit wore his cotton frock. Two years ago Mary had discovered Nookham. Friends had driven her over to have tea in the woods, and to gather the wild strawberries found there in such abundance. She fell in love with the place, and came again upon a private exploring expedition, when she discovered that lodgings were to be had at the post-office, in the house of one Mrs. Gegg. There she spent a most delightful fortnight, sketching. Never was more attentive and honest landlady, never cleaner, more orderly house! It is true that Mary's painting tackle greatly distressed her hostess, partaking as it did of the nature of things 'messy and slummicky,' which her soul abhorred. Otherwise, she liked Mary, as did most people; and she had in her way great toleration for the 'curus ways' of the 'gentry' generally, expecting less of them in the matter of common-sense than she exacted from people of her own class. And now, after two years in Italy, Mary found herself once more in the dear Coteswold country, in the very middle of a perfect June. Nookham generally was unfeignedly pleased to see her again. Few strangers came to stay there, and the roads were too bad and too hilly for even the ubiquitous cyclist. The squire's house was three miles from the village, the vicarage two, and the tall lady with the abundant wavy grey hair and strong kind face had made a very distinct and pleasant impression.

Mary did not catch a glimpse of Jethro during her first day until, happening at post-time to want a letter she had left in her bedroom, she ran upstairs to fetch it.

The room, with door flung wide, faced the narrow staircase. In the very middle of the floor stood Jethro, in rapt contemplation of a large photograph of Giovanni Bellini's Madonna—the one in the sacristy of the Frari at Venice—which Mary had placed on the little mantelpiece.

The day was well on in the week, the cotton frock hung in limp and draggled folds about the childish limbs, and the queer little creature's attitude was almost pathetically boyish as he stood, legs far apart, his hands grasping the lilac cotton where pockets ought to have been.

For a full minute Mary stood watching him. He made no attempt to touch the picture; in fact—and afterwards the circumstance seemed significant—he stood at some distance from it, that he might see it whole.

Mary must have moved, for the stairs creaked. Jethro jumped, did not even turn his head to see who was coming, but darted under the bed with the instant speed of a startled squirrel. She came into the room, shut the door, and sat down on her trunk, remarking, 'If you come out I'll show you some more pictures!' Dead silence for five minutes, while Mary sat patiently waiting. She was determined that she would in no way frighten or constrain the timid child, for it seemed to her that the little Coteswold peasant who stood gazing with absorbed interest at her favourite Madonna must be worth knowing.

'I can't think why you stay under there, Jethro,' she said at last; 'we could have such a nice time together if you would come out, and I must go directly to finish my letters.'

But, like Brer Rabbit, Jethro 'lay low and said nuffin,' so Mary was fain to go and finish her letters, determined to play a waiting game. From time to time she stopped writing, looking pained and puzzled. 'It is dreadful that a little child should be so afraid of one,' she said to herself; 'what can they have done to him?' Presently Jethro rushed past the open door, and later on there came from the direction of the back kitchen a sound uncommonly like smacks.

Mrs. Gegg laid the supper as though she were dealing cards with the angry emphasis indulged in by certain whist players after a series of bad hands. Mary ventured on a timid remark to the effect that Nookham had changed but little during her two years' absence. Mrs. Gegg replied that 'Squire didn't encourage no fancy building,' and that therefore it was likely to remain the same for some time to come. Conversation languished, and she went into the garden to 'take in' certain exquisitely white garments still spread upon the currant bushes, while Mary stood at the front door waiting for the nightingale to 'touch his lyre of gold,' when another and very different sound broke into the scented stillness—a breathless, broken sound of sobs—a child's sobs. She listened for a moment, then turned and went back into the house to follow the sound. From the landing window she noted with relief that Mrs. Gegg was engaged in converse with a neighbour (Mary stood in great awe of her landlady); she mounted a ladder leading to the attic, and there, under the slates, lying full length on the outside of his clean little bed, was Jethro, sobbing with an *abandon* and intensity that left Mary in no doubt as to what she should do this time. Bumping her head violently, and nearly driving it through the slates in her haste, for she could by no

means stand upright, she climbed in and reached the side of the bed.

Her entrance was so noisy that the child had plenty of time to vanish, as he had done in the afternoon; but he was evidently so astonished by her appearance that no thought of flight occurred to him; he even forgot to be frightened, left off crying, and asked eagerly:

‘Did you ’urt your ’ead?’

‘No, not much. I heard you crying, and came to see what was the matter.’

Jethro looked queerer than ever. He wore a voluminous unbleached calico nightgown, several sizes too big for him; the big tears on his cheeks shone like jewels in the soft June twilight, and the thatch of tow-coloured hair was rumpled into a quickset hedge above his great, grave forehead.

‘I’ve bin beat,’ he whispered.

‘Why, what had you done?’

‘I thrown a stwun at Earny Mustoe akez ’e did call oi “Jemima,” and it did break ’s mother’s windy.’

‘Is he bigger than you?’

‘Yes, ’e be noine!’

‘Then why didn’t you go for him and hit him? You couldn’t break any windows that way, and it would teach him better manners.’

Jethro stared in astonishment at this warlike lady.

‘But ’e be ever so much bigger nor me,’ he exclaimed, ‘and I be allays beat aterwards;’ then, remembering his woes, ‘and it do ’urt so, it do,’ and Jethro began to wail again.

Mary gathered the woe-begone little figure into her arms and sat down on the floor, saying cheerfully:

‘Cheer up, old chap; I’ll pay for that window, and you mustn’t throw any more stones; and don’t cry any more, and we’ll have ever such nice times while I’m here.’

It was evident that Jethro was not used to being cuddled. He sat stiff and solemn on her knee, staring at her with great puzzled eyes. She talked to him as tender women talk to children, and finally put him to bed, tucked him in, kissed and blessed him, and climbed down the ladder again. Much to her relief she saw that Mrs. Gegg was still in the garden.

Jethro lay awake, staring at a patch of moonlight on the white-washed wall. Hazily, vaguely there arose in his mind a recollection that at one time some one always tucked him into bed—

some one who looked kindly at him. He couldn't remember the face, but the eyes were like the tall lady's—like the lady's in the picture downstairs; and again Jethro wanted to cry, but not because he had been 'beat.' However, he would not cry; she had asked him not to, and she had such sharp ears, and she would come to see him every night, and she had lots more pictures. Here the tall lady and the lady in the picture became inextricably mixed up, and Jethro slept that blessed sleep of childhood which is oblivion.

'I'd just like to show you, miss, a present as I've 'ad from my nephew down Cubberly way. 'E's on'y fifteen, and 'e's that clever with 'is fingers——' Mrs. Gegg held up for Mary's admiration a frame made of fir-cones which had been varnished and squeezed together till they looked like a hollow square of highly polished brown sausages. 'There, Jethro, if you could make summut like that!'

'I likes 'em better a-growin',' said Jethro, softly.

During the scornful scolding that followed Mary watched Jethro. His serene grey eyes under the square, peaceful forehead looked a trifle weary, and he sighed as his aunt harangued him, but he did not seem greatly disturbed. After all, whether people scolded or not, gracious, gentle things continued a-growin', and Jethro through the sweet uses of adversity had early learnt that 'Nature, the kind old nurse,' never refuses consolation to such of her children as seek it in sweet solitary places with an understanding heart.

Mary found Jethro very difficult to get at. He followed her about, and would sit watching her paint for hours in silent, absolute absorption, but he very seldom spoke himself. One day, as they were walking together down the steep stony road leading to the woods, he suddenly clasped her round the knees, exclaiming, 'You be such a dear 'ooman!'

Mary stooped hastily and kissed the little upturned face. In a life compassed about with much affection and many friends no one had ever spoken to her with such a rapture of appreciation, and she fell to thinking how little she had done to deserve it. Two days after she got a letter.

'The mater cannot write herself,' it ran, 'because she is busy with a big chest in the attic upon which the dust of ages has hitherto been allowed to rest in peace. From time to time you may hear her murmur, "Six, and an average size. Poor little lad! What a shame!—this will do, I think." So you know what is

going on. Do you remember the bundles? All neatly docketed — "To fit boy of twelve," &c. A regular trousseau is coming, so tell that kiddie to cheer up.'

Three days later Jethro appeared at school in all the glory of jacket and 'trowsies;' and the very boy who had most grievously tormented him about his petticoats chastised another on his behalf who made derisive remarks about a 'gal in trowsies.' Thus the chief misery in Jethro's life was removed, and he felt that he bid fair to become a social success.

His aunt manifested no objection to the new clothes. A thrifty soul, she believed in taking what she could get, and remarked quite good-naturedly, that Jethro did look a bit more like other folk now.

'Of a Saturday' Mrs. Gegg 'hearthstoned' the whole of her back kitchen till its spotlessness rivalled that of the whitewashed walls. The placid expectancy of Saturday evening had settled on the village. Mary, tired by her long day's painting, was resting upon the slippery horsehair sofa, and meditating on the impossibility of reproducing on canvas the brilliant transparency of young green larches, when her landlady burst into the room, positively breathless with passion. 'Just you come 'ere, miss, and see what that there mishtiful young imp o' darkness been and done. I'll warm 'im so's'e sha'n't forget it in a 'urry!' Mary hastily followed the woman into the sacred back kitchen, and there in a corner near the pump crouched Jethro, one arm curved above his head to protect it from a renewal of the rain of blows that had just fallen, while the floor was decorated by a monochrome landscape, painted by Jethro with Mrs. Gegg's blue-bag.

Mary gazed at it with astonishment. With strong certainty of touch the child had splashed in by means of the coarse blue the stretch of hills that met his eyes every time he went out at Mrs. Gegg's front door. The queer impressionist sketch had atmosphere, distance, and, above all, perspective. 'Oh, Mrs. Gegg!' cried Mary, holding back the angry little woman with her strong arms as she was advancing across the picture to wreak fresh vengeance upon Jethro, 'leave it! leave it till Monday, and I'll give you blue and whitening to last you a twelvemonth. It is a wonderful picture! Some day you will be proud of him. He couldn't help it. We none of us gave him anything to draw on. Why didn't you tell me, child, that you could draw like this?'

Astonishment was cooling Mrs. Gegg's wrath. She had heard, nay, upon one occasion seen, that a pavement artist in distant

Gloucester earned good money, though it was but a poor trade. Then there was Miss Cardross, always messing with paints and things—perhaps she really knew something about it. ‘If you will leave the picture where it is till Monday,’ continued Mary, ‘I will ride over to Colescombe to-morrow and persuade an artist friend to come and look at it, and we will see what can be done for Jethro. Please, Mrs. Gegg!’ And Mary got her way.

‘You must leave him where he is,’ said the great art-critic to Mary when he had inspected the frescoed floor. ‘He may be a genius. I think he is. All the more reason to leave him alone just now. Give him paper and paints—lots of them; don’t lose sight of him, and we’ll help him when the right time comes. It hasn’t come yet.’

So Mary left him in the peace of the kindly Coteswold hills. And while Bellini’s Madonna smiles down upon him from the whitewashed attic wall, while sun and cloud make light and shadow for him on beech-clad slope and grassy plain, and life is full ‘of mysteries and presences, innumerable, of living things,’ we need not pity Jethro. For, even as one who wandered long ago upon the steeps of far Fiesole found infinite potentialities among solitary places and pleasant pastoral creatures, even so in time to come the little Coteswold peasant may enter into his inheritance in that kingdom where ‘every colour is lovely and every space is light. The world, the universe, is divine; all sadness is a part of harmony, and all gloom a part of peace.’

L.⁷ ALLEN HARKER.

The Study of Plant Life.

THE Alps! Amongst fairly well-to-do English men and women, are there any whose hearts do not beat a little faster at the word, either in memory of happy days of long ago or anticipation of such to come? The early start, the toil and vicissitudes of the day, the cozy inn, the well-dressed dinner to meet a raging appetite, the social evening, and then those crisp, clean sheets, altogether make it just a luxury to live and move and feel. It is a glorious thing to conquer the Jungfrau, to look down from the summit of Mont Blanc on a subject world of snow and ice and crevasses. These are amongst the things that brace the nerves, harden the sinews, and make the Anglo-Saxons who delight in them a dominant race.

But it is only to the few that this high privilege is given. The vast majority of men, and still more of women, must perforce content themselves with humbler joys, with less boastful conquests. And yet I know not but that the memory of a week at Zermatt, of the like at Mürren, or, to travel south, at Monte Generoso, may not have sweeter memories for these than for the conquerors of peaks. To this end, however, it is essential that they should have some pursuit which will replace the use of the ice-axe; nor have we much difficulty in determining what this should be for the majority of educated people. Next to its glorious peaks and snowfields, the great beauty of the Alpine chain is its flowers. No one who has once seen a field of *Gentiana verna* in the Engadine in June, or of *Primula farinosa* in the lowlands about the same time, can ever forget them. To me the memory will ever be green of my first introduction to *Androsace carnea*. It was high up, with little visible all round but snow. A projecting rock cropped out of the snow; in a hollow a little soil had accumulated, and this was cushioned with this lovely plant.

Saussure studied geology in the Alps with a purpose, and other men of science have left behind them far-reaching results

from researches in the same beautiful mountains; but studies of this kind need a long and laborious previous training. There is perhaps nothing that will enable ordinary people, who have neither time nor inclination for deep study, to taste a few drops of the sweets of science with such pleasant accompaniments, as an intelligent study of botany.

The adjective is intentional, and should be emphasised; for there is a large class of persons, chiefly young ladies, who go abroad furnished, at best, with 'Wood's Tourist's Flora,' and a dictionary of botanical terms. Their brothers bring them in large handfuls of flowers from their walks, and they spend laborious evenings identifying these; but to some it never seems to occur that it is worth inquiring as to the function of the stamens which they count so conscientiously; why the blossom of one flower is of gorgeous hue while another is insignificant; why some emit their scent by day and others by night; why one droops its head and another holds it erect; why one is bare in the throat and others covered with hairs; or why in some species these hairs point upwards and in others downwards;—with a hundred similar questions. Nor is it only in the study of botany that such knowledge comes in usefully. How pleasant it must be to the geologist when he comes across a fragment of what once was wood, but, probably millions of years ago, was converted into flint, to be able to tell at a glance whether the tree of which it was a part belonged to the endogenous or the exogenous order of plants; to that family of which the palms are now the most noted examples, or that to which most of our forest trees belong; and how much such a knowledge may suggest of the natural history of the country at the time, of its climate, its fertility, its fauna!

I humbly apologise! I am afraid that I may be misunderstood as speaking disrespectfully of the young ladies aforesaid. Nothing could be further from my thoughts or intentions. I have spent too many delightful evenings in assisting such investigations with the microscope to speak lightly of them. The object of this paper is, not to discourage botany of this kind, but to suggest to those who practise it how much more delightful their study would be if they would pursue it a little deeper.

Few things could conduce more to this than a previous study of Kerner's most interesting work on 'The Natural History of Plants,' admirably translated by F. W. Oliver, profusely illustrated (a great help to the beginner), and published in four half-volumes, comprising about 1,800 pages. When we learn from him how

it is that the instant the snow has melted from a spot, there the *Soldanella* is found in full bloom, we shall look upon its graceful fringed bells with a quickened interest.

If you ask a class of children what is the essential difference between themselves, as representatives of the animal kingdom, and a cabbage, as representing the vegetable kingdom, you will (at least if the children are Irish, as all my little neighbours are) receive a number of answers more or less intelligent. You will be told that one is alive and the other not; that one can feel, see, hear, taste, smell, and the other not; that one is capable of locomotion and the other fixed to the soil; or, if it be a higher class in a board school, you will probably hear something about exhaling respectively carbonic acid gas and oxygen, or about consuming organic and inorganic matter as food; and yet one and all of these characteristics can be shown to belong to some species only, not to all.

The truth is that there is no clearly defined division between the animal and vegetable kingdoms. It is often difficult, if not impossible, to declare of some that are just on the borderland to which kingdom they belong. The most up-to-date definition is that about food attributed above to the objectionably precocious infant at the head of a board school; and yet how far it is from being a true definition will be seen from the following examples.

To begin with ourselves. We and many other animals make salt, a pure mineral, a constant article of food, while not a few plants are as truly carnivorous as a tiger, catching their prey, converting their structure for the time being into a stomach, and digesting the nutritious parts just as we do our dinner. Our bogs and mountains are studded with the attractive little sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia* and *longifolia*). From a loose rosette of battledore-shaped leaves rises the panicle of somewhat inconspicuous flowers. The leaves are thickly sprinkled with bright red tentacles, each crowned with a tiny drop of sticky mucilage, which glitters in the sun and gives the plant its name. But woe to the fly that is attracted by its beauty! Once let him light upon it and there is no escape, the mucilage holds him fast. There is a story somewhere of an Englishman who won a large sum at a gambling-house in Paris. Unwilling to walk the streets at night with so large a sum about him, he was persuaded to engage a room in a lodging-house next door. Fortunately for him he was too excited to sleep, for in the still hours he suddenly became aware that the tester of the bed on which he was lying was slowly and silently descending

to smother him. The feelings of the fly on the sundew must be somewhat similar to his. Equally slowly and silently the tentacles which cover the leaf fold themselves around him; and when they expand again there is nothing left of the fly but the wings and the skin, the rest having been assimilated by the leaf.

Another carnivorous plant is the bladderwort (*Utricularia*). It is an aquatic plant, wholly submerged with the exception of the blossom, and profusely furnished with small bladder-like appendages about the size of snipe-shot. The bladders are open, and the opening is fringed with hairs pointing inwards like the wires of a rat-trap. The small animal organisms, whose number and variety in a single drop of water when examined under the microscope astonish one, can enter, but they cannot leave it. There and then they turn into vegetable.

Once only (it was in the Dauphiné Alps) have I seen the beautiful yellow flower of the bladderwort rising from the water. Having made out what it was, I tried to bring some home in a bottle, but failed. The failure was of small importance, for having thus identified it, I found it growing in abundance about four miles from my own house. I transferred some to a pond in the garden, where it thrives amazingly, but I have never seen it in blossom in this country.

In England, Scotland, and Ireland, our botanist, if he is fortunate, may find the curious subterranean parasite *Lathræa squamaria*, whose English name of toothwort is derived from the ivory-white scales or leaves which cover the underground stem, and which are each a somewhat similar trap for minute insects that make their way through the loosened earth. Thus in air, earth, and water vegetables have their traps set to turn the tables on the animal world, by catching and devouring many of its members.

We all know the evils of what is called 'breeding in and in,' and so do plants. To secure cross-fertilisation their greatest ingenuity and most strenuous efforts are directed. I shall show presently how plants enlist the services of birds in the distribution of their seed, but for the purpose of cross-fertilisation their chief servitors are winged insects, especially bees and moths. It is to attract these that they surround their pollen-bearing stamens with petals of every hue, which add such a charm to life. It is as a bait for them that the drop of honey is distilled at the base of each flower. It is for the night-flying moths that certain flowers reserve their scent till the sun is down; and it may be

noted that these are generally devoid of bright colours. Such would be useless to them in the dark, and they scorn waste.

It has been said that if there were no cats, there could be no clover. The connection is not at first sight obvious, but it is this: clover is wholly dependent for fertilisation on the humble-bee; field-mice are especially partial to bee bread and the grub of the humble-bee; if it were not for the cats, the field-mice would exterminate the bees, and the clover would perish. It is ingenious, but the author of it forgot the unjustly persecuted owl, who does more service to the farmer in keeping down the mice than all the pussy-cats in the place.

More pages than the editor would allow me would be needed to describe all the 'dodges' (I can call them nothing else) that plants are up to to secure a cross-fertilisation. I can but just mention a few. It is with this view that some plants are protogynous—that is to say, it is not till the pistil has been fertilised by pollen from another plant that the stamens ripen their pollen, to be carried in turn to later flowers. A notable instance of this is the *Aristolochia clematitis*, a plant with an insignificant-looking tubular flower of about an inch long. At the bottom of the tube there is a globular chamber which contains the honey. The tube inside is covered with fine hairs, all pointing downwards. Thus small flies can enter, and, if they have previously been in other flowers, the pistil receives from them the pollen that is needed. Once in, the fly cannot escape at pleasure. He must stay there till the pistil is withered, and the stamens have, in their turn, ripened, and deposited their pollen in the chamber where the fly is. Then the imprisoning hairs wither up, probably the supply of honey ceases, and the fly, thoroughly coated with pollen, is free to depart. Liberty is sweet, but to his taste honey is sweeter still. He seeks another flower where the scent of honey is strong, and so the process is repeated till the supply of blossoms ceases.

In a previous number of this magazine I have mentioned the sensitive nature of the stamens of the barberry, and how, when touched near the base by a honey-seeking insect, they spring forward, one by one, to cover him with their pollen, and so compel him to convey it to the next flower that he may visit. Another pretty experiment displays a mechanical arrangement with the same object. When at rest the stamens of the salvia with their anthers lie hidden within the hood, where they are protected from wet. If, however, our experimenting botanist will

take a blunt-pointed pin, and, holding it at about the length of a bee's trunk from the end, insert it in the tube, he will find that it there encounters the short arm of a lever, the long arm of which is the anther-bearing end of the stamen. In its descent the pin (or trunk of the bee) pushes back this lever, thus causing the anthers to emerge from the hood, and gently to touch the finger of the operator, which represents the back of the bee, depositing its pollen there. On the pin being withdrawn, they retire again within the hood, to await another visit.

Though insects are the chief agents of cross-fertilisation, they are far from being the only ones. There are many plants—such, for instance, as the grasses, and, among trees, *coniferae*—whose agent is the wind. They produce pollen in such abundance that a pistil can scarcely escape fertilisation at the hands of the breeze. They do not need to attract the visits of insects, and consequently have neither honey, nor scent, nor gorgeous flowers.

Some plants do not seem to be aware of the benefit to be derived from crossing, and have made all their arrangements for self-fertilisation; while others are so resolved to discourage it that they will not admit the presence of the two sexes in the same flower; for instance, the hazel, the catkins of which contain stamens only, the female flowers being tiny red ones sessile on the twigs, that might easily escape attention. Others carry their table of affinity still further, enacting that no pistil shall be fertilised by pollen from the same tree. These have consequently male and female plants. An interesting example of this is the *Aucuba Japonica*. We have long had the female plant, which was easily propagated by cuttings, but bore no fruit. About a generation ago Japan was opened up, and some botanist brought home the male plant. Since then our old friend, rejoicing in her recovered spouse, has brought forth abundantly, and, where he is near, is yearly covered with brilliant berries.

Not less notable are the habits of plants and their relations to animals in the matter of the distribution of their seed. Some seeds, like those of the thistle, are furnished with a downy apparatus, which enables them to float upon the breeze. They can float thus for miles, seeking a new habitat. Others, like burs, are furnished with hooks, by which they attach themselves to any passing animal, sticking to him perhaps for days, but sure eventually to be dropped somewhere away from the parent plant. Others, again, explode their seed vessel with sufficient force to scatter their seed far and wide. Children, grown-up ones some-

times, are fond of touching the ripening pods of balsam, and trying not to be startled by the explosion which ensues.

Of all the arrangements for dispersing seed, there is, however, none at all to compare with the compact which plants have apparently made with the animal kingdom, and especially with birds. It would almost seem as if there was a formal treaty between the two kingdoms, the vegetable saying to the other, 'We will produce seed in abundance, far more in a single year than the whole world would suffice to grow, and this shall be to you for food, you rendering to us in return this service, that you deposit in a favourable position for growth, and uninjured, one grain in every ten thousand.' Let us see how the animals fulfil their part of the compact. A man picks an apple, and munches it as he goes along, throwing the core away, the core in which are the seeds, which are thus deposited yards, or perhaps miles, away from the parent tree.

Why, on a winter's day, do we see the rooks and the sparrows contending which shall have the first turn-over of the freshly deposited horse-droppings? Why, but because a few grains of oats often pass undigested through the horse? And perhaps an odd grain may escape even their sharp eyes and germinate, thus covered and manured. Other small animals, like the field-mice, make their subterranean store, some of which, through casualties in their small army, escape and grow.

The birds, however, are the principal agents in the distribution of seed. Let us glance at a few instances of this. The branches of an oak and the ground underneath may be seen in acorn-time thick with rooks gorging themselves with acorns. But what is yon glossy purple fellow doing apart from the others? He has flown into the middle of the field, where he can have a better eye upon approaching enemies, and is vigorously hammering away at the ground with his strong beak. Having eaten as many acorns as his craw will hold, he is burying a few with an eye to hard times. When those times come, the 'boy with the gun' may have got him, or he may fail to locate some of his buried treasures, which grow up, and in time prove their gratitude by repaying the acorn with compound interest to his descendants.

The blackbird is especially fond of the berries of the ivy. When he has filled his craw with them, he retires to his favourite tree, and, putting his head under his wing, sleeps the sleep of the just. In the morning the ground under his perch is white with his droppings; but if these be examined, it will be found that the

actual seeds have been too hard for his gizzard, and have been deposited in the very spot most favourable for their success in the battle of life—at the foot of a tree. I must give one more example of this compact. In order that they may germinate, the seeds of the mistletoe must be smudged on to the branch of certain kinds of trees. With this view, the plant surrounds its seeds with a highly glutinous mucilage, which it flavours with a nicety to the taste of the thrush. In eating the berries the thrush can no more escape getting his beak covered outside with this sticky mucilage than a child can indulge in a feast of bilberries with a clean mouth. His dinner ended, he goes, like a tidy child, to wipe his mouth; for this he finds the branch of a tree quite the handiest sort of napkin, but it is not the mucilage alone that he wipes off; an occasional seed has also stuck outside, and this too he deposits on the branch together with the mucilage needed for its adhesion there, in the only position and under the only conditions suited to its growth, and which could not otherwise be easily attained.

It was a purely utilitarian idea that first drew me to a superficial study of botany. As a boy I had read, as all boys do greedily, the story of a shipwreck. The crew had, of course, been cast upon an uninhabited shore, where no food offered but strange plants that might have death hidden in their leaves. Now amongst the officers was one who had some knowledge of botany, enough at least to make him aware that no crucifer is poisonous to the human subject. To him also the plants themselves were strange, but he caused all that were gathered to be brought to him: the cruciferæ he put in the pot, and the rest he rejected; and so he kept his crew alive till help came. The cruciferæ are so named from their petals forming a cross; but let none be misled into supposing that all cross-petaled flowers are therefore innocuous. Some are highly poisonous. A true crucifer must not only have four petals, but it must also have four divisions of the calyx; the stamens must also be examined and prove to be six in number, of which four are long and two short.

Only doctors fully understand how much an experimental and scientific study of plant life has tended to alleviate the ills from which we suffer in our persons and our properties. It was not till the microscope had laid bare the fact that the dread potato disease was simply a fungus, that the means of treating it, which have now reduced its ravages to a comparatively insignificant amount, were discovered. What do we not owe to quinine? But without a chemical and experimental study of plant life we

should never have known that it was to be found in the bark of certain trees.

A study of the natural orders of plants may at first sight appear unattractive, but it is full of interesting facts; witness that about the extensive order of cruciferae mentioned above. I hate Greek names and never use such if there is an English equivalent; but English or Greek, surely it is deeply interesting to learn that, as a rule, all monocotyledons are endogenous, while dicotyledons are exogenous, so that when the first tender seed-leaves of a tree appear above ground, the botanist can tell, within limits, of what nature its timber will be. Even to the uninitiated, such names as Coniferae, Rosaceae, Compositae, Umbelliferae, Liliaceae, Gramineae, or, amongst non-flowering plants, the Ferns, the Mosses, the Fungi, the Algæ, and the Lichens, convey at once certain well-defined characteristics which are a help in the general arrangement of such knowledge as one may happen to acquire. I once asked the members of a Y.M.C.A. if they could name any non-flowering plant. There was but one response; it was from the curate—'carrots'!! And yet the species of cryptogamous, or non-flowering, plants far exceed in number those that bear flowers.

If there is one class of scientists to whose studies botany would appear alien, it is the mathematicians—and yet at p. 396 of the first volume of Kerner will be found some very curious facts, too long to quote here, as to the mathematical distribution of leaves on the stem.

What, I may be asked, is the use of learning all this? Well, if the querist confines his definition of 'use' to money-grubbing, even then the answer may be found above; but, if that word includes the attainment of happiness, it is of the highest use. Few things can more add to the happiness of travel, or even of a saunter round one's own garden, or a walk through town or country, than some knowledge of the reason of things, some perception of how the great God has woven all His works together, making each dependent on the other, till the heart breaks out in its hallelujah, 'O ye mountains and hills, O all ye green things upon the earth, bless ye the Lord; praise Him, and magnify Him for ever.'

THOMAS COOKE-TRENCH.

In the Name of a Woman.

BY ARTHUR W. MARCHMONT,

AUTHOR OF 'BY RIGHT OF SWORD,' 'A DASH FOR A THRONE,' &c.

CHAPTER V.

'SPERNOW.'

A NIGHT'S reflection brought but slight relief to my anxiety and doubt. How that wily Russian general had succeeded so easily and promptly in discovering all about me, I was at a loss to guess; nor was it of much profit to inquire. He had the facts, and the question was how he would use them; and the first gleam of an answer came from a very small thing.

He had offered me first three days in which to leave the country, and then had extended the time to a week. Why? I came to the conclusion at length that he had probably a double reason, for he was not the man to do anything without a clear reason. He was all against my joining the party of the Prince, and was probably resolved to go to extreme lengths to prevent me. But he knew also, though he had been crafty enough not to admit it openly, that I was an Englishman; and that fact might well embarrass him in dealing with me.

Any ill-treatment of a British subject at such a juncture might bring about just such grave complications with our Foreign Office as might imperil the whole Russian under-current policy. That was, therefore, unquestionably one of my strong cards to play, and I resolved to use it promptly.

I judged that in all probability my correspondence would be tampered with, and would, if necessary, pass under his own eyes; so I wrote a letter to a friend in England, stating the fact plainly that I had had an interview with General Kolfort, the Russian leader, in which the fact that I was a British subject had been dis-

cussed between us, and added a few words of assumed annoyance that this should have happened, as it might interfere with my plans in making a career in Bulgaria. I put in some other general matter such as might be written in a friendly letter, and finished with a request that my correspondent would send me two or three articles I had left in his care. This was all fable, of course; but I wrote it to make it more difficult for the General to suppress the letter. Then I added a postscript, with the usual sting in it.

'If you get a chance, you might drop a side hint to Edwardes, of the Foreign Office, that I am here, and known to be English.'

I sealed the letter with careful clumsiness, so that the envelope could easily be opened without the seal being broken, marked it 'Urgent. Strictly private,' and then gave it to a waiter to post. If I was under the surveillance he had suggested, I felt convinced that nothing more was necessary to insure its getting immediately into the General's hands. It would at least give him food for thought.

Then as to his second object. Why had he given me any time at all? A Russian party, strong and unscrupulous enough to plan the assassination of the reigning Prince himself—as they had done—would have thought nothing of keeping me, a mere Roumanian Count (as I told them I was when they had me on the previous evening), rushing me off incontinently to the frontier, and bidding me be off about my business under fear of a stray bullet should I attempt to return. But he had given me a week to deliberate, and I drew the inference that he was really anxious to have an Englishman on his side, and that he meant to use the week to bring strong inducements to bear upon me.

And through all these reflections one dazzling remembrance flashed, as the sun will flash through thin foliage after a summer shower—the great steady glare caught and reflected from a myriad drops on the wet, dancing leaves. It was the memory of the glorious beauty of the Princess, with that look of solicitude for me and of fear of the General which I had seemed to catch.

I had no more desire to fly the country than I had had to leave her witching presence, and a thousand thoughts rushed through my mind, bewildering, stirring, fascinating me, and all urging me to stay until I had at least probed the meaning of her look, and determined whether I could in any way serve her. If she really stood in need of a friend, how gladly— And at that point I broke the thought with a laugh at my own silly conceit.

She had a hundred, aye, a thousand men at her command. And I was a fool.

But I would not leave the country if I could help it, and I ordered a horse and rode out, first to see how nearly my house was ready, and then away for a gallop in the country.

On my return I learned that two officers had called and asked for me; had left word that, as their business was urgent, they would return early in the afternoon. I did not know the names—Captain Dimitrieff and Lieutenant Grassaw—and I could not think what they wanted with me, but I resolved to wait in for them; and while I was waiting, a servant brought me a card from another stranger—Lieutenant Spernow.

The moment he entered I liked his pleasant, cheery looks, and his frank, unrestrained, self-possessed manner impressed me most favourably. With a smile he offered me his hand, and said:

‘I have come in a quite unusual way, Count Benderoff. I am sent, in fact, to make your acquaintance. I am assured we shall speedily be friends.’

‘I am certainly at your service,’ I answered, unable to resist a smile at his singular introduction.

‘It has an odd sound after all, hasn’t it? And yet, do you know, I’ve been thinking how I should put it, and rehearsing all the way. It does sound devilish odd from a stranger, but I do hope—for reasons that weigh infinitely with me, I can assure you—that so odd an introduction will really lead to friendship.’

‘You say you were sent to me?’ I asked, cautiously.

‘Yes; I assure you I am frankness itself. They never trust me with important secrets; I blurt them out;’ and he laughed, as though that were rather a good trait. ‘Old Kolfort sent me—Old Kolfort for one.’

‘I saw General Kolfort last evening,’ I replied, drily. ‘But, sit down and have a cigar, and then tell me why he is so interested in providing me with friends.’

‘That’s a good straight question, but I’ll be hanged if I can answer it. He’s such a sly old fox, with fifty secret reasons for every plain one. Thanks, I’ll have a cigar. Well, he sent for me this morning—you know, I am on the Russian tack in all this business, and that for a reason which I’m pretty sure to let out before I’ve been many minutes with you; in fact, bound to, come to think of it—and—let’s see, where was I? Oh, yes; he sent for me, and said, “Lieutenant, I have a pleasant duty for you—and an important one. I wish you to go to Count Benderoff and make

a friend of him—he told me your hotel—and do what you can to make his stay in Sofia pleasant, as it may be only a very short one. You're the best man I know to let him see what's worth seeing in the city, and to let him know what's worth knowing."

'It promises to be a very kind act on his part.' I spoke sincerely, and my visitor smiled at the words.

'It shall be, if you'll let me, Count, I assure you. But that old fox always has a bitter wrapped up somewhere in the sweet; and as I was leaving, after having talked you over, of course, he pretended to remember something, and said, "Oh, by the way, take this letter to the Count with an apology from me. By an unfortunate mistake it has got opened by some clumsy idiot, and was brought to me to know what should be done. Tell the Count I'm very sorry, but perhaps he may not care to send it for a week or so, after all." "What is it?" said I. "Of no consequence; but the little act will be an introduction for you." Then I saw it was one of those infernal things that are always being done in this country—an intercepted letter, and I felt inclined to fling it in his face, only I daren't. I let him have a word or two about choosing me for such work, but I brought it, and I'm afraid you'll think I'm a regular cad to lend myself to such a thing. But I'll tell you why I decided to bring it in a minute; and I hope I needn't assure you I don't know a word of what's inside.'

I accepted his word without hesitation, and believed in his expressions of disgust at the mission. I took the letter readily enough, and was indeed glad that my little *ruse* had succeeded so completely. Then I gave it a finishing touch.

'I suppose he'll expect you to report what I said. Well, here's the answer.' I struck a match and set fire to the letter, holding it until it was consumed. 'It's not of the least consequence, I assure you, for I took the precaution to send off a duplicate in proper disguise.'

'The devil you did! I'm infernally glad to hear it. I love to hear of old Crafty being licked at his own game.' Then he started and rapped the table as he laughed and asked: 'Was that a decoy? Oh, that's lovely. I won't tell him. I hate the old tyrant, and he knows it; but he knows, too, that I'm horribly afraid of him. And that's what he likes. Gad, that's good!' and he lay back in his chair and laughed aloud at the thought of the General being outwitted. 'And he was so deuced serious, too, that I know he thought he'd done a mighty smart thing.'

He was obviously sincere, and it was impossible not to see that

he thoroughly enjoyed what he deemed a good joke. When he had had his laugh out, he gave a little sigh of relief as he said :

‘Well, that’s over, and I hope you’ll acquit me of any personal part in the matter or humbug.’

‘My dear sir, I acquit you of everything except of having done an unpleasant thing pleasantly,’ I answered, cordially.

‘Thanks. And now, is your stay going to be very short in Sofia? I must tell you before you answer that that’s a thing old Crafty told me to find out. I suppose he has some underground reason or other? He’s a beggar for that.’

‘Frankly, I don’t know. I hope not, but I don’t yet know.’

‘Well, I was surprised when he mentioned it, because we’d heard that you’d taken a big house, and were going to make a bit of a splash, you know. And, by Jove, it would be a blessing, for most of the houses here are just deadly dull.’

‘“We heard,” you say?’

‘How quick you are!’ he answered with a smile, and he had a slightly heightened colour as he went on. ‘Yes, we—we two; not old Kolfort, you know. But—well, we’ve had a chat about you more than once; and last night, after you’d been at the General’s house, we had a regular consultation about you—and, to tell you the truth, that’s another reason why I’ve come.’

‘I don’t think I understand.’

‘No, of course you don’t. I don’t altogether. I think; but——’ He hesitated, and pulled at his cigar for some moments in a little embarrassment. ‘You see, it’s a bit difficult to make you understand without telling what a man doesn’t care to talk about. I suppose something happened at the General’s that affected you closely, and made you—hang it all! Wait a minute, and let me try and think how I was to put it.’

I smiled again at this, and watched him as he fidgeted with his cigar somewhat nervously and uneasily.

‘You saw the Princess there, didn’t you? I don’t know, but I heard something or other; and, anyway, she must have been speaking to—to some one who spoke to me. Doesn’t that sound rather ridiculous?’

But I scarcely heard his question. The reference to the Princess Christina had set my thoughts whirling at the bare idea that he was in some remote way a messenger from her, and that she was sufficiently interested in me to make these indirect inquiries as to my movements and intentions.

‘Yes, I saw the Princess last night,’ I said, breaking the pause.

'Do you come from her?' I was astonished at the steadiness of the tone in which I spoke.

'Well, yes; but yet not exactly—oh, hang it all, I'd better out with it. I shall only make a mess of things;' and he laughed gaily, and flushed. 'I came to you mainly because I was asked to do so by Mademoiselle Broumoff, who is one of her closest companions; and Mademoiselle Broumoff and I are, in fact, betrothed. Now you've got it, Count; and that's why I fiddled about just now, and didn't know quite what to say.'

'I am much mistaken if Mademoiselle Broumoff, whose acquaintance I shall hope to make, is not an exceedingly fortunate girl, lieutenant; and I speak without the least affectation when I say that your news interests me deeply.'

It did, in all truth. To have as a friend some one who was in the close confidence of the Princess herself, was a stroke of good fortune which I could indeed appreciate; and I resolved to bind this handsome young officer to me by all possible bonds.

'The one commission is an antidote to the other, at any rate, I hope,' said Spennow; 'and if it's any gratification to you to know it, you can rest assured that the Princess takes a lively interest in you, and for some reason or other feels herself under some sort of obligation to you. Frankly, I don't know what it is; but I do know there are plenty of our fellows who'd like to stand in your shoes in such a thing. You can't think how we worship that woman!' he cried, with a flash of sudden enthusiasm.

'I can think of no cause for such a feeling of obligation,' said I, speaking indifferently to hide the tingling glow of delight at his words.

'Oh, of course. By Jove, I was nearly forgetting,' he exclaimed, with a jerk, as he plunged his hand into his pocket and brought out a packet of papers. 'Are you engaged for to-morrow night?'

'I? No indeed.'

'Then you'll be able to come all right. I've got you a card for the ball at the Assembly. It's a big do; and most of the folks worth knowing will be there, if you want to know them.'

'Is this from the General?'

'Well, not exactly, though he'll be glad enough for you to go. Mademoiselle Broumoff put me up to it.'

'Then I may have the pleasure of seeing her there?'

'Of course, she's going, rather; and the Princess too. You'll come?'

'I shall be very pleased. It is just the chance I shall welcome.'

Was this another little personal attention from the Princess, or merely a development of the policy of winning me to the Russian side? I was turning this over, and thinking how far I could get the answer from Spornow, when a servant came to say that the two officers who had called earlier in the day had returned.

I told the man to show them in, and explained matters to Spornow. He knew them, he said, but not their errand.

This was soon explained, and caused me no little surprise.

'We come from Lieutenant Ristich,' said Captain Dimitrieff, speaking very formally and stiffly.

'And who is Lieutenant Ristich?' I asked. 'I do not know him.'

'You met yesterday at General Kolfort's house, and he considers that you insulted him. Will you be good enough to tell me who will act for you? The facts have been explained to me.'

'Do you mean that the lieutenant wishes to force a quarrel upon me? I remember him now, of course; but I know of no insult, and certainly I have no quarrel with him.'

The captain raised his eyebrows and shrugged his shoulders.

'Shall I say, then, that you prefer to apologise?' he asked, superciliously.

'Certainly not,' I returned sharply, stung by his manner. 'What I mean is that nothing passed which need make another encounter between us necessary.'

'That is an *impasse*.'

'I cannot help that,' said I, indifferently.

'Well, you must either fight, sir, or refuse to fight; and in the latter case the lieutenant says he will be driven to the extreme course of publicly insulting you.'

'This is monstrous,' I answered angrily. 'It is nothing less than forcing a quarrel upon me, as I say. But if that is the lieutenant's mood, and he wishes for another lesson in swordsmanship, I'll give it him. I have but very few friends here in Sofia, but the matter shall be arranged without delay. Perhaps——' I looked across at Spornow.

'Can I be of any assistance, Count?' he said, eagerly.

'I shall be deeply obliged if you will. Perhaps these gentlemen will retire to another room for a few minutes, and then you

can wait on them, and matters can be put in course before they leave the hotel.'

They went, and I explained all that was necessary to Spernow, telling him that I attached little importance to the affair, and that I had already proved myself much more than a match for the lieutenant with the sword; that as the challenged party I should choose swords; but that the conditions were to be made as little stringent as possible, so that the fight could be stopped as soon as either was wounded, however slightly.

He went away then, and when he returned said that he had made all arrangements, and that we were to meet early the next morning at a spot just outside the town, often used for the purpose.

'Mademoiselle Broumoff will take a keen interest in this business, Count,' he said, as he was leaving me later. 'Lieutenant Ristich is an object of her deepest hatred; and so will the Princess for the matter of that. He is no favourite of hers either.'

'You will say nothing, of course, until it is over; and you will get a friend to act with you, and perhaps you will both breakfast with me afterwards.'

'With pleasure. You take it coolly, Count,' he said as we shook hands.

CHAPTER VI.

THE DUEL, AND AFTER.

It was a glorious morning, the air crisp, fresh, and clear, when I rose early, and found Spernow waiting for me in the courtyard of the hotel. He introduced his friend, Captain Zoiloff, who would act as my other second in the duel.

'I got Zoiloff to come because he's well up in these matters,' said Spernow, 'and I'm not. He'll keep us right.'

I did not take the affair of the duel seriously; my bout with Ristich at the General's house had shown me my greater skill, and I had no intention of even wounding him seriously, and no fear whatever that he would be able to touch me. I said as much to my companions as we walked together to the ground.

'Ristich is very mad against you for some reason or other,' said Spernow. 'And he's a hare-brained chap, so I should look out.'

'He is not much of a swordsman,' put in Zoiloff, 'but he has one or two clever strokes that have served him well enough in other affairs of this kind;' and he went on to describe them. But he found me a somewhat inattentive listener, and after a short time the talk turned to other matters.

We were first on the ground, and Captain Zoiloff promptly set to work to choose the most suitable spot, and the positions which we should respectively take up. He displayed a manifest relish for the task, and was evidently an old campaigner in this sort of thing.

He had scarcely concluded his work when the other party arrived, bringing with them a doctor. They saluted us formally, and without any delay the seconds consulted together, decided upon the ground, and selected the weapons.

While they were thus engaged Ristich and I stood apart, and I saw that he was very pale and moody-looking, glancing every now and again at me with patent ill-feeling and animosity.

'Ristich has got his marching orders,' said Spernow to me, when he and Zoiloff came to explain what they had arranged.

'How do you mean?'

'He is being sent back to Russia, and leaves to-day.'

'I heard him declare he wanted to go,' said I.

'Yes, but not in semi-disgrace. He puts it down to you, and that's what makes him so bitter. They tell me he raged like a fiend when he heard it last night, and he means mischief.'

I glanced across at him. He had thrown off his uniform, and I saw, too, that his sword-arm was bandaged. Till that moment I had forgotten all about the wound I had inflicted.

'Stay a moment,' I cried to my seconds. 'He is wounded. I can't fight a disabled man,' and I told them what had occurred.

'That's his look-out,' said Zoiloff, in a very business-like tone. 'He is the challenger.'

'I won't fight a cripple,' I said resolutely; and at that they called the other seconds aside, and a long conference ensued, in the course of which Ristich was more than once consulted. I saw him explaining matters to his seconds, and flourishing one of the rapiers to show that he could use it quite well.

'He insists that the fight must go on,' said Zoiloff on his return to me, 'and I really don't see that you can object.'

'But it isn't fair,' I protested. 'Under ordinary circumstances, and with the full use of his arm, the man isn't my equal with the sword, and, disabled in that way, the thing's absurd.'

'His point is that he has to leave Sofia, and that, as he is determined to fight you, he will have no other chance. I shouldn't insist, Count Benderoff, if I were in your place. It will only cause talk. The doctor has examined the wound and says Ristich is fit to fight, and he has shown us, as you may have seen, that he has complete command of his sword.'

'It makes me appear ridiculous to fight a wounded man,' I urged. 'Try further protest, and say I will meet him anywhere at any time when he is well again. I will travel to Russia if necessary.'

'I am afraid that we shall only get some sneering reply that you don't want to fight, or something of that sort.'

'I would rather be sneered at for not fighting a wounded man than fight one,' said I. 'I will take care of my reputation.' And they went across to repeat the protest and deliver the message.

It was as fruitless as the former one, and when Zoiloff returned he was very angry.

'I will not repeat his message,' he said; 'but it was most insulting. You must fight, Count. If we have any more conferences we shall only have more duels. I think you have acted most honourably; but, believe me, you can only press this further at great risk to your name.'

He spoke so earnestly, and Spernow joined with him, that I allowed myself to be persuaded, and threw off my coat and waistcoat and made ready.

We took up our positions under the shadow of some trees, and when my opponent was close to me the look of hate in his eyes, as they rested on mine, confirmed what Spernow had told me of his intention and desire to do his worst.

But from the moment when our blades crossed and the word was given us to engage, I knew that the issue must rest with me. Ristich attacked me immediately with great violence and impetuosity, in the hope of finishing the matter before his weakened strength should give out. I had no difficulty in defending myself, however, and, had I been in the same vengeful mood as he was, I could have run him through.

My object was not that. I wished merely to wound him slightly, or disarm him; and I tried two or three times to do the latter, though without success. I fought as coolly and warily as if we were in the school trying a bout with the foils, and this coolness aggravated my opponent intensely, so that he lost all self-control.

Watching patiently for my opportunity, I found it when he had made one of his reckless, angry thrusts, and with a quick counter I drove the point of my sword into his shoulder. Then I drew back instantly and threw up my weapon off the guard. Whether he saw this or not, or whether his rage blinded him to his wound and to all else besides, I know not, but instantly he thrust out his weapon with a blow aimed straight at my heart.

I saved myself only by springing back, while a shout of indignation came from Zoiloff.

'A foul stroke; I call you to witness, gentlemen, a foul and dastardly stroke,' he cried, excitedly, as he rushed in and struck up my opponent's sword. 'Count Benderoff has behaved splendidly, and if your sword had gone home, Lieutenant Ristich, it would have been murder. A most foul stroke.'

In a moment he was the centre of a group, all as excited as himself. Ristich protested that he had not seen me draw back from the fight, that he had not felt that he was wounded, and that he was eager to continue the fight. But Zoiloff would not hear of it.

'I withdraw my man, certainly,' I heard him say, and he brought matters to a dramatic conclusion. 'I declare the stroke a foul one, foully dealt, and if anyone questions that, I am ready to make good my words now and here;' and he singled out Captain Dimitrieff and addressed him pointedly: 'What say you, Captain?'

He looked very dangerous as he paused for an answer, and the Captain clearly had no wish for a quarrel with him.

'Of course, the fight is over,' he answered, evasively.

'Exactly, and we'll leave it at that,' said Zoiloff, drily, as he turned on his heel and came to me with Spernow. 'I never saw a more dastardly thing. I wouldn't have believed even a Russian would have done such a thing.' A speech that set me wondering.

'They won't cross Zoiloff,' whispered Spernow to me as I was dressing, rapidly. 'He's a demon at the business. I'm glad I brought him.'

'What did he mean about "even a Russian"?' I asked.

'He hates 'em as much as I do. I'll tell you another time,' replied Spernow.

'I congratulate you, Count Benderoff, on a lucky escape. That man meant to murder you; and Dimitrieff ought to be ashamed of himself for not speaking out plainly. But they hang together in a way that's disgusting, these——' He checked himself sud-

denly, with a quick glance at me, as though he had said more than enough before a stranger.

'I hope he really did not know I was not on guard,' I answered.

'I'm afraid it's a hope not much stouter than a spider's web;' and he laughed bitterly. 'The man meant murder, and was mad when he saw you could hold him so easily. You use the sword like a master, Count—I should like to try the foils with you.'

'Nothing would please me better than a few hints from you,' said I, readily. 'I am a good deal out of practice.'

'Then I shouldn't care to play with you in earnest when you are in practice,' was his deftly flattering reply. 'If we are to quarrel, I'd better pray for it to be soon;' and his taciturn face broke into a smile.

'It's something to earn Zoiloff's praise in these things, Count,' said Spernow, laughing. 'He's generally as chary of it as a coy woman of her kisses.'

'You are both breakfasting with me, I hope,' I said, as we moved off the ground. 'Then we can go round to the house I am getting ready, and, if you like, I can have my first lesson in the shooting gallery which I am having fitted up there.'

'Nothing would give me greater pleasure; but unfortunately, as I told Spernow, I have an engagement which I cannot break,' said Zoiloff. 'But I can be with you in about a couple of hours from now, and then I shall be at your service. I should like nothing better than to see your gallery.' And we arranged it so.

While we were at breakfast I asked Spernow to tell me, as he had promised, how it was that so much hatred of the Russians existed among the very men who were on their side. Such a fact, if it were one, might have considerable influence upon me.

'I am the worst hand in the world at explaining things,' he answered. 'But it is quite true. We don't trust them, but we trust each other less, Count; that's about the size of it, I think. We must have some kind of steady leadership, and what is there here? Look at the men who are at the head of things, and what are they except a crowd of nobodies, risen from nowhere, and setting their course solely by the compass of self-interest? The needle points always in that direction, and all the rest goes running round it.'

'But why trust Russia?'

'Why not? So far as we can see, the one steady influence in this country is directed by her. We hate Russia, but we

are afraid of her; and where else can we look for any hope of help?'

'The Prince,' I suggested.

'He is as powerless as his poorest subject, and he has round him a crew that are after nothing but their own personal ends. They yell about patriotism and independence and all the rest of it, but would sell themselves to-morrow to the highest bidder. They only don't sell themselves, because nobody thinks them worth buying. The only real power is wielded by Russia, and I suppose we think it's better to make friends in advance with what must be the controlling hand in the country. It's not a very high game, is it?—but where's a better? Men like Zoiloff would only too gladly jump at a chance of something better.'

'And the Princess Christina?'

'Ah!' And his face lighted with enthusiasm. 'We do all but worship her, not only for herself, but because we have come to believe she will in some way do what we want to see done—draw out the best that lies in Bulgarian life. She is truth itself, and right, justice, and honour are the cardinal articles of her faith.'

I looked at him in surprise and began to see there was more in him than I had at first thought.

'You think more seriously of these matters than I had believed,' I said.

'I?' and he laughed. 'Ah, it does not do for us Bulgarians to let the Russians believe we take either our affairs or ourselves too earnestly. But some of us are sound enough in heart at least. Enough of politics, however; why should I bore you with them?' And he turned away to lighter topics, rattling off a dozen stories of the latest gossip and tittle-tattle about the society of the city.

I did not check him, for it struck me that he was anxious rather that I should retain my first impressions of him than begin to look on him as taking a serious interest in the affairs of the country.

After breakfast we went round to my house and I showed him the alterations I had made. He took the keenest interest in everything, declaring that my wealth would make me at once an important figure in Sofia, and that in a few weeks I should have half the city flocking to my doors.

When Zoiloff came we went to the shooting gallery, and both the men were vastly interested in everything I had done. I had had the place fitted as a gymnasium, with every kind of appliance that money could provide; many of them sent specially from England.

'I did not know that you Roumanians cared for these things at all,' said Zoiloff. 'I have not done you justice.'

'I am half an Englishman,' I answered, purposely—for I had begun to alter radically the original part for which I had cast myself. If I was to stay in Sofia, I felt that I must wrap round me the protection which that magic formula, British subject, alone could give. The announcement surprised them both.

'Ah, that accounts for it,' exclaimed Zoiloff. 'You English are a wonderful people. But why do you come to Sofia? Pardon me, I have no right to put such a question,' he added hastily.

'I am also half a Roumanian; and the freedom of Bulgaria is essential for the independence of that country.'

I turned away as I spoke, and pretended not to notice the swift, shrewd look which both men turned upon me.

'I shall hope to know much more of you, Count Benderoff,' said Zoiloff, with so much earnestness that I thought my words had touched the cord in him I intended.

'I think it is my turn to be surprised in you,' said Spernow. 'And I hope that we three may come to understand each other well.'

Were these invitations from them both to speak more openly? I thought so, but felt that for the present I had said enough.

'Shall we try the foils?' I asked.

'With pleasure,' agreed Zoiloff; and while he was making ready he glanced round the spacious gallery and added: 'What a magnificent hall you have here; there is room to drill half a company of soldiers, as well as train a band of athletes!'

'Yes,' I answered with a laugh. 'It would be a fine house for a revolutionary movement.' And at this they both started, and again shot shrewd, searching glances at me; but I was busy selecting the foils.

'You English are a wonderful people,' said Zoiloff again, but this time very drily.

We set to work then with our fencing, and to my surprise, and much to Zoiloff's admiration, I proved slightly the better swordsman. He had not a spark of jealousy or envy in his composition, and when I had beaten him for the third or fourth bout in succession, he only laughed and said:

'I am your first recruit, Count; and you are a master I am well content to work from—and follow.'

'Good,' exclaimed Spernow, 'I will be the second—if you will have me, Count.'

'My dear Spernow, I could wish no better friends or comrades in any work than you two.' At this answer, Zoiloff, taciturn and reserved though he was by nature, offered me his hand impulsively, and said with great earnestness, as I took it :

'Now I am sure we understand each other, and shall work together for the same cause, Count;' and the warmth of his hand-grip told me that in him I should have a firm friend.

Spernow was not nearly so skilful a swordsman, and knew it; but he was anxious to learn, and we arranged that we three should make a rule of meeting daily for such practice; and when we were separating I said :

'As you can see, I take a great interest in these things, and I should like you to do me the favour of bringing with you such friends of yours as you think would like to come and would help us by taking an interest in the work here.'

Zoiloff's dark eyes lighted meaningly as they held mine.

'You would soon have a large circle of friends, Count.'

'Every friend of Bulgaria would be a friend of mine,' I answered.

'You mean all that that implies?'

'I mean all that that implies; and the wider interpretation you give to it the better I shall be pleased.'

'It should be a day of good omen for the country when your house is thrown open for that purpose. A party of really patriotic Bulgarians is no mere dream-project—though they will be young men, mostly. By Heavens, but I am glad Spernow induced me to go out with you this morning.'

When they had gone, I stayed to think over all the chances which this unexpected turn of matters suggested. It might yet be checkmate indeed to Russian plans, if we could find the means to form such a party of young ardent patriots from within the very ranks of those supposed to be devoted to Russian interests. There were possibilities calculated to satisfy the wildest ambitions and effect the most drastic changes.

It would be a perilous task enough at the outset, for I could not doubt that, should the project get wind, as was most probable in that land of spies and treachery, General Kolfort would spare no efforts and stop at no measures to crush it under the wheels of his enormous power.

But it was worth the effort. To me it was infinitely more welcome than any secret counter-mining intrigue, such as I had had in contemplation. It would be a real sturdy stroke in the cause of

freedom, and, if once successful, no man could tell how far or wide or deep its glorious effects might not be felt.

It roused me till the blood coursed quickly through my veins and my pulse beat with feverish throbs, for in it I saw the real interest and honour of the Princess Christina herself. The men who had been with me were both pledged to the eyelids to serve her, I knew; and I knew further that every man they brought to the house to join us would have the same enthusiasm in her behalf. Who could tell but that by these means I might yet be the agent to place her on the throne, but without the hampering restrictions of any Russian marriage?

This thought was whirling in my head as I walked back to my hotel, there to receive another startling surprise.

Some one was waiting to see me, had been waiting for two hours, on important business.

'I am Major Grueff, and am the bearer of a letter to Count Benderoff, of Radova. Have I the pleasure of speaking to him?'

'Yes, what is it?' I asked, concealing my surprise.

'His Highness has given you a captain's commission in the Sofia Regiment, Count, of which I am the major in command, and has requested me to carry back your answer to this letter.'

I opened it and found it a request that I should wait upon the Prince on the following day.

There was no doubt as to the meaning of this. It was the Countess Bokara's work; and as I penned my reply, that I should gladly accept his command, I called to mind her declaration that our next meeting would be at the Prince's palace.

'I am glad to welcome you to the regiment, Count,' said the major; but he spoke in a tone I did not like, and I conceived an instinctive but invincible prejudice against him. 'And, as I have been so long waiting, I will get you to excuse my hurrying away.'

I did not attempt to stay him; for I wished to be alone to think over this new development.

If I accepted the captaincy, what could it mean except that I committed myself to the Prince's side? And this at the very moment when the other and vastly more congenial plan had begun to take shape in my mind.

I thought I could see again the alluring but cruel face of the Countess Bokara, and hear the ring of triumph in her voice as she had turned to me after her cold-blooded deed:

'Now you will have to join us?'

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE BALL.

THE ball that night was a very brilliant affair, and when I arrived the rooms were already somewhat crowded. I found Spernow waiting for me near the entrance.

'You are a little late, Count; we began to fear that perhaps you were not coming. Mademoiselle Broumoff is anxious for me to present you at once. Will you come with me?'

As we threaded our way through the throng, he told me the names of many of those present, but I was looking everywhere for the Princess, and felt disappointed at not seeing her.

Mademoiselle Broumoff was sitting alone in a corner at the far end, and I saw her eyes light up as she caught sight of us. She was not pretty, but her face was bright and clever, with an ever-changing play of expression that made it very attractive; while a pair of deeply set thoughtful eyes spoke of great intelligence.

As soon as I had been presented, she made a place for me at her side and sent Spernow away with a reminder that he had a number of duty dances with important partners.

'You have kept him from them so long, Count, that he will have a busy time,' she said with a smile.

'I have kept him? I have but this minute arrived.'

'Of course, that is the reason. I had commissioned him to bring you straight to me, and you are late.'

'I did not know that such an honour was depending on my arrival, or I would have been earlier,' I said with a bow.

'I have been most anxious, and half feared you meant to disappoint us; ' and in a light strain we chatted pleasantly. I soon perceived that my companion was bent upon creating a favourable impression, while on my side I was not less desirous of making a friend of one who was so close an intimate of the Princess. We danced the next waltz together, and at the close of it she asked me to lead her to one of the conservatories.

I observed that she was careful to select a quiet corner, where we could speak without fear of being overheard, and after a moment's pause she said earnestly:

'I have been really anxious to know you, Count.'

'I am flattered,' I answered.

'No, not that,' she replied impulsively, with a slight shake of

the head. 'I mean more than that. Michel has told me all that has passed between you—especially this morning at your new house. Captain Zoiloff is a man to trust implicitly, you know that?'

'I formed that opinion strongly,' I said, beginning to wonder what she was going to say.

'Michel tells me you are half English. Is that a secret?'

'No, certainly not. We English are not afraid to own our nationality, as the actions of many of us show too prominently sometimes, I fear.'

'But Englishmen of wealth do not commonly choose Bulgaria as a place of residence—at least not without some strong motive.' And her eyes searched my face for the truth.

'Eccentricity has never yet been denied to us.'

'Is it in your case eccentricity—only?'

'I am also half a Roumanian,' I said, repeating the answer I had given in the morning to Zoiloff.

'And the Roumanians are all but Russians.'

'Is not the Princess Christina a Roumanian?' I retorted. 'And also of the Russian party here?'

'Do you think that?' she asked quickly, turning the battery of her eyes full on me again.

'What time or means have I had to learn how to distinguish between appearances and facts?'

She laughed—a very silvery, sweet laugh.

'You fence as cleverly with your tongue as with your sword, Count. What do you want to know?'

'Nothing that cannot be told me voluntarily, mademoiselle.'

'Why do we all trust you instinctively?' she asked. A quite feminine thrust.

'I am happy if you do,' I parried; and at the reply she shrugged her shoulders, and a shadow of impatience crossed her expressive face.

There was a pause, in which she looked down and played with her fan.

'We wish to trust you entirely,' she said next, in a low, earnest voice. 'The Princess wishes it.' A swift glance shot up to notice the effect of this.

'I have no more earnest wish in life than to serve the Princess,' I declared, the words coming from my heart.

'To serve her is to serve the cause of freedom and the cause of Bulgaria.'

'Freedom as the Russians interpret it?'

'Freedom as the English love it,' she answered, in a tone that vibrated with enthusiasm, her eyes flashing and her cheeks colouring. 'The freedom that we true Bulgarians read and dream of, crave and would die for,' she added, her voice deep and low with feeling.

A long pause followed, in which my thoughts were busy. Had the Princess Christina inspired this feeling, and was this strange girl an agent in pressing me to join such a movement? My heart beat fast at the thought.

'Is that a cause you would serve, Count?' she asked.

'These are strange things to hear from those whom I find all gathered under the wings of the Russian Eagle!' I said cautiously.

'There may be stranger yet to hear,' she returned sharply.

'The Prince who is on your throne is no friend of Russia.'

'The Prince has never gained the confidence of true Bulgarians. The men he keeps about him are patriots in nothing but name; and he has neither the wit to winnow the false from the true, nor the courage to set the false at defiance.'

'You would play for a big stake?'

'And make our lives the counters. Is not that enough?' The retort was given with a show of bitterness. 'You English are cold and calculating.'

'We are cautious, certainly.'

'Yet you should hate the Russians.'

'No one has accused us of loving them.'

She made another pause before replying:

'Perhaps I have been too rash and have surprised you; but we thought from what Michel told me of what passed this morning at your house, that—well, that all was as we wished, and that you were already with us.'

'You thought this?' I asked, purposely putting an emphasis on the pronoun. She understood me and smiled.

'The Princess and I both thought it,' and I heard this with delight.

'You did not hear more than the truth, mademoiselle.'

'Then we are to be friends in it all?' she cried; and her face was radiant with pleasure as she turned her eyes once more full upon me.

'Show me how I can serve the Princess, and I will do it with my whole heart, and if need be with my life.'

'She will be here to-night, and you can tell her. The news will have the pleasanter savour coming direct from you.'

She knew how to fire me, and I would have given half my fortune to have known what lay behind the meaning glance of her eyes, which started thoughts I would not silence, and yet dared not indulge.

As I sat there, half bewildered, I saw a tall, fair, truculent-looking man forcing his way arrogantly among the people and coming in our direction, while he looked about him on all sides in search of some one.

'Who is that?' I asked.

'A man to fear, Count—the worst enemy we have. Duke Sergius. A man whose eyes we have always to blind.'

At that moment he caught sight of my companion and he hurried his pace, a heavy frown darkening his sensual, insolent features.

'I have had much trouble in finding you, mademoiselle. I might almost have thought you were trying to avoid me. The waltz we were to dance together has commenced.'

Mademoiselle Broumoff smiled ingenuously at him and said:

'I scarcely thought you were in earnest when you put my name on your programme. You do not generally honour me by remembering it.'

'I have something particular to ask you,' he replied, with such selfish insolence that I could have kicked him. He caught something of this expression in my face as he looked casually at me, and his glance deepened into a steady stare as he tried to frown me down. But I returned his look with one in which I tried to convey some of the dislike and contempt I felt at his attitude, and, perceiving it, mademoiselle rose hastily, put herself between us, and drew his attention by placing her hand on his arm and saying, as she bowed to me:

'I am ready now.'

As they moved off I heard him ask who I was, but could not catch the reply.

I hated the look of the man, and tried to persuade myself that the feeling was not in any way prompted by what I knew about his design upon the Princess Christina. If I had before needed any inducement to drive me into opposition to him, my hasty prejudice would have supplied it; and I sat now absorbed in thought, chewing the cud of all that had passed between the Princess's staunch little emissary and myself, and wishing for the

hour and the means to thwart him. They would come, I felt, and I nursed my anger and fed my animosity as I sat there piecing together the threads of the net that was closing round me, and drawing me forward upon a path that would lead I could not say whither.

Spernow's voice roused me.

'You are not dancing, Count. Won't you let me find you some partners? There are plenty here who wish to know you. Well, have you and Nathalie had an interesting conversation?' he asked in a lower voice, dropping into the seat at my side. 'I know how anxious she was for it.'

'I hope great things from it,' I answered.

'Are you to be presented to the Princess?'

I looked at him in surprise, not understanding the question.

'Oh, the presentation was to hinge upon the result of your talk with her.'

'Then probably I shall be presented,' I returned, smiling.

'Good, very good; nothing could be better, indeed. Come, then, and let us go in search of partners. But don't fill up your card, you may need a gap or two in it presently.' I guessed his meaning, but said nothing as I went with him back to the dancing hall, was introduced to several people, and for an hour danced and chatted as though I had no other object in life.

I was not too much engrossed by my partners, however, to miss the entrance of the Princess Christina, and more than once when I passed close to her in the course of a dance I caught her gaze fixed upon me with evident interest. Once especially was I certain of this, when she and Mademoiselle Broumoff were in close and earnest conversation; and it was with a thrill of pleasure that I felt that I was the subject of their talk.

Soon after this Spernow came to me and said that the Princess was anxious that I should be presented to her; and with a fast-quickenning pulse I went with him to where she and her companion were sitting.

Almost directly I had made my bow Mademoiselle Broumoff rose and said to Spernow:

'This is our dance, Michel,' and as the pair went away I took her place by the side of the beautiful woman who exercised so overpowering a fascination upon me.

'A more conventional meeting than our first, Count,' she said.

'A very brilliant scene,' I replied naïvely; for now that I was alone with her I felt like a tongue-tied clown. My stupid answer

surprised her, as well it might, and I saw a look of perplexity cross her face. After an awkward pause, I added: 'Your coming then saved my life.'

'Scarcely that; but I have since heard the particulars of that matter, and I have been ashamed that you should have suffered such treatment in my name. I am glad of an opportunity of assuring you of my regret.'

'I would gladly suffer much worse on your behalf,' I blurted out nervously, and the answer brought another pause, during which I struggled hard to overcome my embarrassment and self-consciousness. I desired above all things in the world to win the favour of my companion, and yet I sat like a fool, at a loss for the mere common-places of conversation. She would think me a dolt or an idiot.

How long my stupid silence would have lasted I cannot tell; but the Princess in a movement of her fan dropped her dance card, and in returning it to her I looked up, and caught her eyes upon me lighted with a rare smile.

'Do you return it to me without your name upon it?' she asked.

'May I have the honour?' I murmured.

'What is a ball for, but dancing?' she smiled. 'But if you write your name there it will be a sign and token.'

'Of what?' I asked stupidly.

'Of much that my dear little friend Mademoiselle Broumoff tells me she has said to you to-night.'

'What is a ball for, but dancing?' I repeated her words as I took the card and wrote my initials against a waltz. 'It will make the dance memorable to me,' I added, under my breath.

'I shall read it for one thing as a token that you have acquitted me of all responsibility for the scene at General Kolfort's house.'

'There was no need for any token of that, Princess,' I replied, beginning to shake off my paralysing nervousness.

'And of the rest?'

'That I desire nothing better than to be enrolled among your friends.' I spoke from my heart then, and the words pleased her.

'There may be many dangers, and more difficulties.'

'I am prepared for both—if I can serve you.' I looked straight at her for the first time, and her eyes fell.

'I could have no more welcome friend,' she said softly.

This time the pause that followed was due as much to her embarrassment as to mine, and I noted this with a touch of delight.

'You had a long conference with General Kolfort?' she asked, a minute later.

'Yes; he threatened me with all the power of his enmity if I did not decide to ally myself on his side, and gave me a week in which to do so or leave the country.'

'And your decision?' she asked quickly.

'Has been made to-night.'

'To do what?'

'To devote myself without reserve to your interests.'

'I am glad—and proud.'

No answer that she could have made could have filled me with more supreme pleasure.

'I had feared a quite different result from news which reached me to-day. You know your affairs are pretty freely discussed just now.'

'What news was that?'

'I heard that you had received a captain's commission in the Prince's own household regiment. Is that so?'

'It was unsolicited by me; and I learnt it only to-day. I have not yet accepted it. I am to see His Highness to-morrow.'

'You will find him a good man, but sorely distracted by doubts and fears. All willing to serve Bulgaria; but afraid of Russian influence, and unable to choose good advisers here. His nerves have been shaken by the plots against his life, and his judgment shattered till he cannot appraise the men about him. Were matters different he would be an ideal ruler for us.'

'And what of the other influences round him?' I asked guardedly; but she understood me and replied openly:

'You mean the woman whose life you saved. I cannot understand her. Her ruling passion seems to be her hate of me. And a woman with a passion, be it jealousy, hate, or love, is no safe guide.' I detected a note of sadness in her tone. 'You ran a great risk that night, Count, a fearful risk.'

'There was little danger that I saw.'

'I do not mean the seen danger; that may have been small for a man whose bravery and skill with weapons are such as yours. But the unseen dangers—the consequences that may always pursue and overtake you when you least think of them. It is such terrible deeds as that which fill me with dismay and dread of the future. How can a cause hope to prosper, the foundations of which are secret murder, implacable violence, and such desperate bloodshed? And these things are done in my name, and

apparently with my sanction. Did not General Kolfort threaten you with the consequences of your act ?'

'Yes, but I do not take his threats too seriously. It is one thing to assassinate a Bulgarian woman, another to murder a British subject.'

'When you have been longer in this distracted country you will see the distinction differently. But we must talk no longer in this strain here. Too many eyes are upon us and too many ears open. Balls are for dancing, Count,' she added in a light tone and with a smile.

I understood that I was dismissed, and rose and walked away. I was in no mood for dancing, and I went into one of the conservatories to think over what had passed between us, and remained there until it was time to claim her for the waltz she had promised me.

We danced it almost in silence, save for a commonplace or two about the ball and the people present ; but at the close she said earnestly :

'I am leaving almost directly. I shall be at home to-morrow afternoon, and shall be interested to know your impressions of the Prince.' Then in a lower voice : 'You must be careful, Count. Accept the commission in the regiment ; but do not pledge yourself to His Highness's service. You will not find it necessary. Maintain as strict a neutrality as possible ; and then see General Kolfort and tell him what you are doing. It might be well to see him before you go to the Palace. Emphasise the fact of your British nationality. You have a difficult part to play ; how difficult you do not yet see, perhaps. But your success and your safety will always be of the deepest concern to me. Remember that, always.'

She spoke earnestly, and in her eyes, as I glanced into them, I saw again that look of solicitude which at our previous meeting had moved me so strangely.

And the sweetness of her voice, the touch of her hand, and the tender softness of her glance, were haunting me all through the night, and urging me to I know not what strenuous efforts in her behalf.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT THE PALACE.

THE next morning I was up early and went for a long ride. It was likely to be a critical day for me, and I had to try and look well ahead to see where I was being carried by the new set of the tide in my affairs.

My conversation with the Princess Christina had had a great effect upon me. For one thing it had made me more resolved than ever to devote myself to her, whatever might be the consequences ; but her words of warning, her evident belief that there was danger for me, and above all her pleasure at my declaration of loyalty to her, had roused all my instincts of caution, while they had strengthened my feelings towards her.

She was shrewd, clear-cut in her views of men and things, devoted to the cause of Bulgaria, and openly allied to the Russian party, whose rough and violent methods she had nevertheless so indignantly decried. What then was her object ? Was she playing the doubly hazardous game of attempting to use the Russian influence and power for an end opposed to theirs ?

That was the only solution I could see. And it was one which I knew must involve her in a course fraught with such peril, that only a woman of iron nerve and implacable will could contemplate it without fear. And yet she was brave enough to take such a course without, so far as I knew, a single man trained in statecraft and intrigue to help her. Could I take such a rôle ? The mere thought of the possibility filled me with enthusiasm not unmixed with much embarrassment.

If my surmise was right, I felt that her scheme was just that which our Foreign Office would do their utmost to assist ; and, in helping her to gain the throne on such terms, I should be fulfilling in the best possible way the object of my presence in the country. But I knew, too, that open help from the British Government was impossible. That had been made unmistakably plain to me, and I must make it equally clear to her. Her advice to make the most of my British nationality might have been prompted by a belief that our Government would help her, and I must show her the groundlessness of any such hope.

At the same time, the course she had indicated agreed best with my own views : to maintain an open neutrality between the

contending sections while devoting myself to her interests. Her whole object must be put fully before me, however; and I resolved to speak very frankly that afternoon. The prospect of the close association with her was infinitely alluring, and it required more than a single effort to drag my thoughts away from dwelling upon this to the more practical consideration of other matters. To secure that friendship I would willingly venture all that I had in the world; and I had but to think of it for my heart to be thrilled and my senses dazzled.

But what of the Duke Sergius and the story of the secret betrothal? The man was a selfish, sensual brute, as I had seen for myself. Was it possible that she would even go to the length of sacrificing herself in a marriage with such a man to secure her end? Then I recalled a sentence of Mademoiselle Broumoff's: 'A man whose eyes we have always to blind;' and I repeated it over and over again, till at last I grew to read it by the light of my own wild, vague thoughts and hopes—that there was no betrothal, but that the pretended agreement to it was a part of the subtler plot which my Princess was weaving. The thought of such a betrothal was maddening to me, and I worked myself up until I thought I would rather pick a quarrel with him and run him through the heart than see her condemned to be the wife of such a brute.

I was cooler, however, when I returned to my hotel, and my wits were clear and wary enough as I set out for General Kolfort's house. I was well received, but he made haste to show me that he knew already of the fact of my captain's commission.

'I am glad to see you, Count Benderoff—or shall I say Captain?'

'Choose your own form of salutation, General. It was of that matter I came to see you,' I returned.

'Is that all?'

'All?' I asked, as if in astonishment.

'Do you accept the commission in the service of the Prince—or rather of the lady who has offered it you—or in mine?'

'In neither; but as an honour offered to a rich British subject who has taken up permanent residence in Sofia.' His shrewd old eyes lighted at this reply, which he had certainly not expected.

'So that is your line, eh?' he said drily. 'Considering that they know nothing of the Hon. Mr. Winthrop's existence, they have acted a little by accident in honouring a British subject. Don't you think so?'

I smiled. 'At any rate, they have made me the offer, and I have decided to accept it. But I preferred to come and tell you, after our interesting little conversation of three days ago.'

'That means, then, you will remain in Sofia?'

'My house is nearly ready for my occupation, and I shall hope to be honoured by your presence in it as my guest.'

'Umph! You have not forgotten our conversation, I see.'

'It was scarcely one to be forgotten.'

'And I understand you claim the rights of a British subject.'

'I am half a Roumanian, General, with considerable possessions there,' I returned, equivocally.

'You are a very ambitious, or a very reckless, or a very clever young man, Count. You have thought over your course well?'

'I am not given to act on impulse.'

'Yet cleverer men than you have tried unsuccessfully the dangerous policy of attempting to ride on two horses at once.'

'I can but fail,' I answered, indifferently.

'Then you decline to enrol yourself in my service?'

'I neither decline nor accept, General.' The reply was unwelcome, and he sat a moment with brows knitted.

'You will fail, sir, as certainly as you make the attempt. But I must know, in view of future possibilities, whether you claim the status of a British subject or that of a Roumanian Count, or whether, again, I am to regard you merely as a captain in a Bulgarian regiment.'

'I shall be in the unique position of enjoying all three,' said I, and noticed with some amusement the effect of this answer; and then added with a laugh, and in a light tone: 'I don't expect you to take me too seriously, General Kolfort.'

'If you are a British subject, I can ask your Government to recall you; if a Roumanian Count, I can use other influence to deal with you; while, if you are merely a Bulgarian officer, you will be responsible to me for the deed which you have already committed.' His tone was tense, concentrated, and full of earnestness. 'Understand me; I do not alter. If you will not join me, you shall not stay in Bulgaria. I am not to be trifled with.'

'I can appreciate that, for you have already had my correspondence tampered with, in order to prevent certain news reaching England. I have committed no act for which I am not quite prepared to answer—openly; and all I demand is that fair play which we English claim as the right of all—whether English, Roumanian, or Bulgarian.'

He listened to this with a grim smile on his hard face.

'You mean that you are ready to risk breaking yourself on the wheel. Very well; I confess I looked for a somewhat different decision, judging by what has passed in the last two days—your conversations with various people; but remember, and, indeed, you are not likely to forget, what I have told you is my firm resolve. If you stay, you must join us.'

I left him then, feeling that I had created pretty much the impression I desired—that, in dealing with me, he would have to regard me as a British subject; and that, coupled with the fact of my increasingly close relations with the Princess and those about her, would suffice to secure my safety for a time.

With the reigning Prince I was at a loss what line to take. It was difficult to decide beforehand; but I was resolved to go to the length of refusing the captaincy in the regiment if the conditions attached to its acceptance were in any way embarrassing to my freedom.

But my interview with him was a surprise to me.

He received me alone, and spoke with a freedom I had not expected, giving as the reason for his attitude my rescue of the Countess Bokara; and when I told him as I did, for there was now no longer any reason for concealing the fact, that I was an Englishman, his frankness increased. He jumped to the conclusion that I had some sort of credentials from the British Government, and it was only with difficulty that I disabused him of the idea.

He had the most engaging personality of any man I ever met. He was strikingly handsome; every movement was marked by a courtly but unstudied and natural grace; his voice was toned in perfect accord with his courteous and kindly bearing; and his manner so sympathetically receptive as to impress you with the conviction that all you said had the utmost interest and importance for him. A courtier to the finger-tips, and yet withal a prince, it was impossible not to be charmed with him. I might have been his most intimate friend instead of the merest stranger who had come to thank him for a favour just bestowed. There was something lacking, however—strength; and therein, without doubt, lay the secret of his failure.

'What reason can a wealthy Englishman have for settling in a place like this, unless he bears a commission of some kind?' he asked, while indulging his hope that I was indeed charged with the duty of aiding him.

'Had I such a mission, your Highness, should I not have come straight to you?'

'I suppose so, but yet it seems strange. I suppose they know in England how matters are with me, and what must eventually happen if nothing is done.'

'All Europe knows of the difficulties of your position,' I answered diplomatically.

'And all Europe does nothing but look on with folded hands, leaving me helpless to kick against the pricks. Do they think I bear a charmed life to withstand for ever the plots against my life that are being daily formed, and that I can go on for ever avoiding the poison or the dagger or the bullet that my enemies have ever in readiness for me? Do they take me for a zealot so tired of living that I am willing to keep my life always on offer to the first hand daring and shrewd enough to take it? And all this for a freedom which they mouth about and will not help, and for a people who have been corrupted to hate me, though I have doubled their country, led them to victory, and saved them from overwhelming disasters. By Heaven! the ingratitude of this people is as colossal as their selfishness.'

I said nothing, and in a moment his bitterness passed, and he smiled.

'This is poor hearing for one who has come generously to offer me his services, and who has already placed me under a load of obligation. But at least I will be frank with you, Count Benderoff. I can give you this commission, give it gladly, and welcome you for what I believe you to be—an honourable man; but your services are of no use to me. They come too late—too late.'

'I do not understand your Highness.'

'It shall not be for want of plain dealing with you, then. The dear friend whose life you saved, and who has brought you to me, is urging—the impossible. She does not know it, or cannot realise it, or will not—what you will; but, mark me well, my days in this ungrateful country are numbered. You will not use the information I give you—but I have resolved to abdicate.'

'To abdicate?' I cried, for this was news indeed.

'Yes; to abdicate. That is my fixed and irrevocable resolve. Had you brought me the promise of help from England, I would stay and fight it out, and strive to realise those high hopes with which, under God, I declare I accepted the throne. But what can I do alone, or almost alone, against a people who plot and plan to depose or murder me, who have tired already of the puppet

ruler which other Powers imposed upon them, and against the cursed canker of this Russian intrigue? In all the land I cannot now tell who is friend and who foe. In my very household the air reeks with conspiracy and intrigue. I know not whether any man I meet by chance may not be sent to do murder. I never lie down at night without wondering whether I shall see the next morning's sun. I never taste a meal without the thought of poison. I never speak a word without the expectation that it will be carried to the ears of my implacable and ruthless foes. And never a sun rises and sets again without I know that the deadly work of corruption has been carried a stage farther.'

'Such thoughts as these, your Highness, grow by brooding.'

'Good God! man, they are the natural germs with which this Eastern air is crowded and polluted. No, no; these are no idle fears. Russia is relentless, and I am powerless to resist her. I will not be her tool. I could stay in safety and in what the world calls pomp and honour, a great Prince, if I would but stoop to do her bidding. I will not; and therefore my choice to abdicate or die. Would God it could have been different!'

I was silent in the rush of thoughts these utterances roused.

'You will not tell the Countess Bokara this? It is my grief, the bitterest irony of all my position, that I am driven thus to mislead the one friend who has been staunch to me, the truest friend God ever gave to a disappointed man, a foiled and thwarted Prince. I have told you—it will, indeed, be public knowledge in a few weeks from now, and Europe will reap the crop which her vacillation has sown—that you may not be buoyed up with false hopes from this grant of the commission. It would be a Greek gift, indeed, did I not tell you the truth—that you have nothing to hope from it. I can guess, of course, what the result will be. You will be drawn to the Russian net. That is a vortex which sucks in everything.'

'What is that?'

I turned like a needle to the magnet as I heard the ringing tones of the Countess Bokara, who had entered the room unknown to us.

'Who will join the Russian party—you, Count Benderoff?' she cried eagerly, almost fiercely, as she came quickly forward. 'No. Prince, I will answer for him. He dare not,' she added.

'How much did you hear, Anna?' he asked rather uneasily.

'Enough to rouse my indignation, that was all.'

'I was telling the Count that there is no hope to be gained in my service, and there is but one side here for a man of action.'

'Prince, Prince, why will you always damp the enthusiasm of those who would be your friends and adherents? Why this constant tone of depression? These everlasting fears and forebodings? There is no cause for them, Count. We are on the eve of a stroke that will change everything—everything—and foil these coward traitors and restore in all its former strength the Prince's influence. There is no monopoly of craft and guile in these Russians! A clear head, a strong hand, a loyal heart, and a daring sword, can change all. We are not so hopeless but that a clever *coup* can save our cause and make us once again all-powerful.'

The Prince threw up his hands with a gesture of weakness.

'It is too late,' he murmured, despondently. 'Too late.'

'It shall never be too late while I live,' she cried, desperately. 'It shall never be said that you were beaten by a woman. Force her from the path, by fair means or foul—and forced she shall be—and all the flimsy superstructure of this clumsy plot falls like a shattered dream. Never shall Bulgaria be crushed beneath that woman's heel while I have strength in my right arm, or there remains a knife or a bullet in all the land. I swear it.'

She uttered the vengeful words with all the vehement force of her violent temper, and as I looked at her I could see the thoughts of murder lighting her strained, glowing features, and brightly gleaming eyes.

But while they stirred repugnance in me they seemed only to add to the Prince's despondency.

'There has been too much blood shed already,' he said, in a tone of rebuke.

'Too much; ay, so much that one woman's life more will make no difference. So they thought when they planned that mine should be the life—and shall I be softer than they?'

The Prince looked at me with an expression I was quick to read, and I made a movement as if to leave.

'I shall see you again shortly, Count, and you will take up your military duties at your early convenience. Meanwhile, I depend upon your discretion. All that you have heard here is for yourself alone.'

'Absolutely. I understand,' I answered, and took my leave.

'You cannot go like this,' broke in the Countess. 'I have yet much to say to you. I need your advice and help.'

'Madame, I have urgent matters that call for attention immediately,' I replied, and the Prince thanked me with a look.

'And are not these matters urgent?' she cried, indignantly.

'The Count has my permission to retire,' said the Prince, with sudden dignity.

'When do you return, sir?' asked the Countess. 'I must see you at once. I cannot brook delay. I am on fire when I think of all you must help me to achieve.'

'My duties will bring me here constantly;' and as I withdrew I could not decide whether my admiration of her courage and staunchness to the Prince or my loathing of the deadly methods by which she was prepared to prove it were the greater. Admirable as a friend, she was hateful as a woman; and as she watched me go she appeared like a beautiful dangerous fiend, till her face turned to the Prince and her eyes glowed with the intense love for him which was the inspiring passion of her strange, reckless nature.

(To be continued.)

At the Sign of the Ship.

IT seems that of late I dropped some observations, in these pages, on what I have heard styled 'Body Snatching.' This technical phrase means the publication by A. of a book of which the copyright, the possession of B., has just expired. There is no infringement of law in such publication, but it runs counter, as I understand, to the unwritten tradition, or etiquette, of Pater-nosteria. Therefore I suggested to men of letters that they should not lend their pens to the adorning or elucidating of books published by A. immediately after the copyright has expired in the arms of B.

* * *

What I said has been censured by 'C. K. S.' in an essay framing, as it were, a recognisable portrait of what Burns calls my 'mug.' In spite of the strictures of 'C. K. S.' I remain, I fear, impenitent. To be sure opinions may differ, and the point at issue is perhaps inconspicuous, though, I think, essential. If any line is drawn, it must be drawn somewhere. Thus nobody would dream of censuring publishers, or annotators, of Shakspeare or Milton, or of Dr. Johnson. I am accused of inconsistency, (as I understand) because I have written introductions and notes on Coleridge and Scott. But I did not make prey of these authors as soon as the breath was out of the bodies of their copyrights. For many years 'all men had taken their prey' on Scott and Coleridge, as on the Northern lowlands in the last century; or as on Shakspeare and Dr. Johnson. I trust sincerely that I injured no man's interest, or sentiment. Certainly I worked with the approval and assistance of the lineal descendants of the Author of *Waverley*, and of the Author of *Christabel*.

* * *

Here an obvious point may be taken. Many works of great writers are just passing out of copyright. These writers have living representatives, direct or collateral. Those representatives may not wish to see their fathers' or uncles' books adorned, or corrected, by modern men of letters. Such objections may be

well or ill founded, but I think that they ought to be respected. Thus C.'s *History of Patagonia* may be just now left unprotected by the law of copyright, and D. may blamelessly desire to edit the book, correct the errors, and add the latest results of research. But C.'s representatives may not like this: and C.'s original publishers will, of course, respect the wishes of the representatives of C. But A., a publisher, may have no such scruples. Is D. to assist him in publishing a new and improved edition of C.'s *History of Patagonia*, the moment that the copyright expires? The question is left to the discretion of D., a man of letters. It is a question, not of law, but of delicacy. Suppose that an American publisher desires to bring out the book of a living English writer, a book not copyright in America. Or suppose that an American writer has neglected to copyright a new book, which an English publisher desires to produce, without the consent of the American author. An English man of letters, asked to 'edit' either work, will probably, if the nature of the circumstances occurs to him, decline to be a party to either enterprise. It is lawful for him to take part, but it is not expedient. In the same way, I think, he may choose to decline a share in producing any book of which the copyright has just expired, in England. At all events, the point of conscience is worth considering.

* * *

If I remember rightly, 'C. K. S.' named three or four English firms (probably there are others unnamed) which do not take their prey on the lands of newly defunct copyright. Such firms, it is obvious, being of some antiquity, are placed at a disadvantage. A., B. and C. only started in business recently, say within the last thirty years. Unless they have purchased old copyrights, there is nothing of theirs on which the older houses could drive the spoil, even if they were so inclined. The new men have, commonly, none but books young in copyright, and full, at least, of legal life. They have no 'bodies' to 'snatch,' even if their 'bodies' were worth 'snatching.' There can be no reciprocity in these laudable practices, between the long-established E. and the F. of yesterday. In Carlyle's celebrated petition, he begs that a certain period may be allowed to copyright, after which people 'may steal.' Whether, to use Carlyle's phrase, people *should* steal, at the very earliest moment permitted by the law, is, obviously, a question merely of moral taste, which every one must answer for himself. That question can scarcely be decided by affirming that the new hand is a much better hand than the old one. Yester-

day I saw a copy of an edition of *Vanity Fair*, a book which is open to all men who desire to drive a *creagh* over it. The work was decorated with new illustrations that, to me, seemed almost profane. A new and feeble Becky, a new and terrible Rawdon Crawley, an Emmy who made me shudder, were presented to the eye. These did not improve the novel, and I don't think a man of letters should try to improve it, or elucidate it, without the approval of the representative of the Author. The task of elucidation would be pleasant. Probably many of the new generation do not know who 'Ross and Osbaldistone' were; they are named in connection with a pigeon shooting match. These heroes are now less universally familiar than they were when first the yellow covers of *Vanity Fair* blossomed, half unseen. But the scholiast must wait a while, however anxious to be at Ross and Osbaldistone.

* * *

The words of the old song, 'The bonny bonny Banks o' Loch Lomond,' or 'o' Binnorie,' have long been a puzzle. Mr. William Black did not like them, and, in his last novel, *Wild Eileen*, he published a version doubtless of his own composition. I then put forth, in the 'Ship,' a version of my own, which, to be sure, made sense, but needed a number of historical notes. I now offer a traditional version, collected, or recollected, by a lady of Clan Diarmaid, who, when a child, heard it sung as follows.

* * *

BY YON BONNIE BANKS

By yon bonnie banks and by yon bonnie braes,
Where the sun shines sae bright and sae clearly,
Where I and my true love were ever wont to gae
On the bonnie bonnie braes of Binnorie.
Oh ye'll tak' the high road, &c.

Wi' his bonnie laced shoon and his buckles sae clear,
And the plaid on his shoulder hung fairly,
Ae blink o' his ee wad banish a' care,
Sae bonnie was the look o' Prince Charlie.

As lang as I live, and as lang as I breathe,
I'll sing o' his praises sae clearly,
Though my true love was slain by the arrows of death,
And Flora laments for Prince Charlie.

The thistle will bloom, and the king hae his ain,
 And true lovers meet in the gloamin',
 But I and my true love will never meet again
 By the bonnie bonnie braes o' Binnorie.

* * *

All the more because it is so dreamlike and confused, I am inclined to think that this is really a traditional version. 'The arrows of death,' so incongruous to the general style, and so easily improved into congruity, is a touch of the eighteenth century. Why the speaker and the listener are to enter Scotland by different paths, remains a mystery, nor can we decide whether Loch Lomond, or the Binnorie of the old ballad (wherever it may lie), is the original reading.

* * *

In Lady John Scott has passed away a song-writer of remarkable merit, and a link with the generation of Sir Walter Scott. Her husband, the brother of the young Duke of Buccleugh of Scott—the 'old Duke' of Border memories—had left traditions of his sporting feats that reached me in my childhood. Two or three only of Lady John's songs were well known, such as *Douglas, Douglas!* and *Ye Murmuring Waters*. Like Lady Nairne and Lady Anne Lindsay, Lady John Scott shrank from the notoriety of authorship. I have heard that many of her verses were never given to the world, and that some or all of them, in manuscript, were accidentally lost. A daughter of the old Cavalier house of Spottiswoode, she retained the ancient opinions, and she possessed a valuable collection of Stuart relics that never were exhibited in public. Among these things (I believe) was the wedding ring of Charles Edward, with his head, in cameo, on a turquoise. In the Stuart Papers has recently been found, in his hand, the rhymed posy of the ring; not a splendid example of the suppressed *Poems by the Young Chevalier*. Probably not one copy of that tract is known to survive. The relics, or most of them, have been bequeathed by Lady John to the Duke of Buccleugh. She was fond of things old, and erected, I believe, a memorial on the scene of a very strange traditional event, 'The Foul Fords,' near Longformacus, in Lammermuir. The version of the tradition given in my *Book of Dreams and Ghosts* (p. 269) was recorded, I believe, by Lady John, though it reached me through another channel. It seems too probable that her songs, for the most part, have passed beyond record, a thing to be regretted, though probably consonant with her own wishes.

* * *

These pages are no place for politics, for what is written to-day here may not be published for a month. In a month events may confute to-day's wisdom or make it obsolete. But there can be no harm in reminding such philosophers as combine love of their brother Boers with denunciations of wrath against such British soldiers as have not 'taken the pledge,' that the Boers themselves are far from being Total Abstiners. They are said to have 'done themselves very well' at Kimberley; champagne being present in their host. References to beer and even to whisky in their correspondence prove that they are what dwellers in a thirsty land usually are—rather fond of a modest quencher. Let me not be supposed to blame them; far from me is the intention. But if some reasoners really believe in their own principles, they should not confine themselves to denouncing the Briton who is athirst. They should circulate 'Temperance' tracts among military men of *both* sides. When I read of 300 ships that brought wine from Bordeaux for about 8,000 French in Scottish service (say in 1558), I appreciate the heroic thirst of the men of the age of the Reformation. It is about a shipload of Bordeaux wine to every twenty-seven men: there or thereabouts. Huge quantities of wine, about a daily quart for each man, were at the same period provided for English armies on the march, not to speak of beer, which was almost as necessary as gunpowder. In those days it was a goodly *ruse* for a besieged garrison to fill the outer court with casks of liquor, and leave the gate open to the thirsty foe.

'Thirty casks are nearly done, yet the revel's scarce begun,
It were knightly sport and fun to strike in!'
'Nay, tarry till they come,' quoth Neish, 'unto the rum—
They are working at the mum, and the gin!'

The poem is in *Bon Gaultier*; and I wish some modern editor of that classic would tell me who Neish was, and Sir Launcelot Bogle, and Sir Roderick Dalgliesh, and Provan, and George of Gorbals, and Brownlee. 'Tis 'A Legend of Glasgow,' but sorely needs a scholiast.

* * *

Not only the drink, but the meat of an English army, about 1550, seems to have been liberally supplied. Thus, in 1547, Somerset led 18,000 men for a three weeks' raid into Scotland. For eight days' march he provided 22,000 gallons of *sweet* wine: some kind of sherry or sack. He sent provisions to the Firth or Forth for twenty days in the same proportions. Each man had

daily, 'a pound of biscuit, a pottel of drink, and two pounds of flesh.'

* * *

This will seem portentous to Mr. Miles, author of *Muscle, Brain, and Diet*.¹ Mr. Miles's is a remarkable book. He is a Master of Arts, and a 'Classical Honours Coach' at Cambridge, and 'Winner of the Tennis Gold Prize' for the last three years. Moreover, he is amateur champion at Rackets. Consequently his muscular development and staying powers must be remarkable. The point is that *he* does not eat two pounds of beef a day, with a pottel of wine, but lives on 'cheaper and simpler foods,' such as Protene Biscuits (whatever they may be), and, generally, on grain and green things. He is logical enough to see that what suits him need not suit everybody, but it may suit many people, and the diet is cheap. A pretty parody of a Socratic or Platonic dialogue predisposes the reader in favour of Mr. Miles, who, at least, has humour and reading, and is no fanatic. He began his New Diet by way of experiment, 'without a shred of faith,' so his success cannot be attributed to 'suggestion,' or 'imagination.' He can now work harder, and play harder, and does not need so much exercise to keep 'fit.' Moreover, whereas he had previously no objection to his beer and other fluids, he has now no taste for those luxuries. Clearly the commissariat for an army of *milites*, of Mr. Miles's, would be light and frugal. He has given up tea, and is devoted to proteid, 'or albuminous matter,' about which the present critic knoweth nothing. Mr. Miles's normal day begins at 6.30, includes a walk (or run) of six or seven miles, four hours of tuition and study, an hour of tennis, three hours of philology, and about two hours of Darwin, and Drummond's *Natural Law*, the last, probably, taking the place of a novel or other work of fancy. *But* a mutton chop produces depression and pains in the joints. So I prefer to cleave to mutton chops. There is something cheerless and lacking in conviviality about a diet of biscuits and nuts, and other cheap and simple things. But a fairly pleasing list of *menus* is given, and, on the whole, Mr. Miles (by dint of *not* being a fanatic) makes out probably the best case for a kind of vegetarianism that has ever been stated. We know that Tennyson tried the experiment, but came back to his ordinary diet with extreme gusto. It is certain that almost everybody who can do so eats too much, and that people in very good health eat relatively little and drink less.

¹ Sonnenschein.

Our existing habits of diet have little to be said for them, except that they are pleasant! We may, or our descendants may, change their habits. Claret, port, and Burgundy are pleasant. The men of the last century acted simply on this knowledge, and many of them were giants in mental and bodily strength. But poets, philosophers, or statesmen, they died early, almost all of them, and were early incapacitated, and suffered ten or twelve years of agony from gout. Pitt, Fox, Smollett, Fielding, and many others are mournful examples. The average of life among modern men of genius really seems to give about twenty years, at least, of additional and less painful existence, when we compare, say, Gladstone, Tennyson, Carlyle, Ruskin, with eighteenth-century people of equal eminence. These are unscientific statistics, of course, and Tennyson's bottle of port did him no harm. At a first glance, changed habits in diet seem accountable for the improvement. A similar change, in the direction of Mr. Miles's ideas, may do as much for the people of the future.

* . *

As to drinks, Mr. Miles candidly admits that 'at present there seems to be no really pleasant drink which is free from stimulant or irritant.' Tea and coffee, as well as alcohol, are bad for us somehow. But, in the new diet, it seems that people will not feel a desire for alcohol, tea, and coffee. Obviously the one way to cure intemperance is to remove the desire to drink. If the world takes to Protene Biscuits it will automatically be relieved of the craving for the mum and the gin. But, alas, 'Man, being reasonable, must get drunk,' as the poet says; and he will cleave to what is pleasant and profiteth not. If he is to be converted, Mr. Miles is more likely to convert him than are the common vegetarians, on whose errors he discourses as an impartial friend.

* . *

'Read anything to me but history, for *that* cannot be true,' Sir Robert Walpole is said to have observed. Probably he said nothing of the kind; but it is assuredly very difficult for history to be true. I have just noted a curious instance. Mr. Froude, in his 'History of England' (volume vi., p. 502, 1870), is quoting a letter of Lord James Stuart to Queen Elizabeth. Its date is August 6, 1561. Lord James is hinting that Elizabeth might do well to recognise his sister, Mary Stuart, as successor to the English crown. 'What if your Majesty's title did remain untouched as well for yourself as for the issue of your body? Inconvenient were it to provide that to the Queen my sovereign

her own place were reserved in the succession to the crown of England . . . ?' Now this is intelligible, but not readily intelligible: Lord James means, 'Where would be the inconvenience in the arrangement?' Still, I own that the sentence puzzled me on a first reading, especially as, on the same page, Mr. Froude quoted Lord James as using the word 'inconvenience,' which, in the letter as cited, he did not use. Now the odd thing is that Lord James *did* use this very word 'inconvenience' in another copy of the same letter, running, 'What inconvenience were it, if your Majesty's title did remain untouched,' &c. This is the copy given by Mr. Tytler, and the whole sentence is perfectly clear at the first glance. Apparently Mr. Froude meant to write 'What inconvenience were it,' &c., but somehow *did* write what I have quoted; the words 'Inconvenient were it,' which begin a new sentence in Mr. Froude's version, being really meant to follow 'What,' and precede 'if your Majesty's title,' while 'inconvenience' was accidentally written 'inconvenient.' In other passages of the same letter curious discrepancies occur between the two copies: Mr. Froude using the letter in the 'Scotch MSS. Rolls House,' and Mr. Tytler following the draft, I presume, in the State Paper Office, Edinburgh. So a poor body, I suppose, must examine both MSS. with his own eyes. After all, probably Elizabeth never saw the letter, as it was enclosed to Cecil, to show it or not to show it, and he was not likely to lay it before the Queen.

* * *

Of what colour were 'eyes of vair,' such as are attributed to Nicolette, in 'Aucassin and Nicolette,' and to other beauties of old time? *Vair* is a kind of fur, and I believe some think that *verre* (glass) is meant: glass-coloured eyes. In the opposite way, others hold that Cinderella, with her glass slippers, shoes of *verre*, was really 'a young lady in fur-topped boots;' slippers of *vair*, like her who won the heart of Mr. Winkle. As to the 'eyes of vair,' a correspondent points out that, in heraldry, the fur, *vair*, 'is depicted as blue on white, and there is reason to believe that originally it consisted of a white fur on which patches of blue fur were fitted. It seems to me that this would make apt comparison with bright blue eyes and pearly white eyeballs.' He adds a remark on fair-haired girls 'whose sclerotics are a translucent pearly greyish white—the iris being of a very clear brilliant blue,' quite worthy of Nicolette. But I fear that heraldic colours were fantastically conventional: however, the theory is as good as any that one has seen mooted.

* * *

In a very minor literary matter I am confronted by a curious conflict of evidence, external and internal. In the *Cornhill Magazine* for February I wrote an article on the old ballad of *Lord Bateman*. Cruikshank, about 1839-40, illustrated an edition of this ballad. The tract contains an editorial Introduction, confessedly not by the artist, with notes clearly by the author of the Introduction. Now as to the ballad, it is certainly traditional, it is undeniably *not* by Dickens, Thackeray, or Cruikshank himself. Yet the little volume is sold as 'by Dickens' to collectors of Dickens's first editions. Was Dickens, then, the author of the Introduction and Notes? In my *Cornhill* article I denied this, and attributed the Notes to Thackeray. They are in his vein of academic banter, the vein of the notes to his own *Timbuctoo*. Dickens had nothing academic about him. The notes 'chaff' Byron: Thackeray was always mocking at Byron. I remember no sign that Dickens had found Byron out, or took any interest in the noble Poet. In fact, I would swear to the notes as Thackeray's, and I appeal to all Dickensians—are the notes like Dickens's work?

* . *

But a correspondent informs me that he heard a brother-in-law of Dickens aver, about 1840, that, to his knowledge, Dickens wrote the notes to *Lord Bateman*! So what becomes of my internal evidence for Thackeray's authorship? Dickens's brother-in-law, sixty years ago, told a living and honourable witness that Dickens was the author of these amusing academic skits. I cannot distrust this evidence, and yet—I read the Notes again, and my critical conscience shouts 'Thackeray!' Perhaps Dickens imitated Thackeray. If so, I wish he had imitated him more abundantly.

ANDREW LANG.

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